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A Kind of King

JOSEPH BENNETT:
Armistice Day

OLIVER SNYDER:
On 'Billy Budd'

JOSEPH WARREN BEACH

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WINTER 1951

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A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE
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JOSEPH BENNETT:

Armistice Day

I

She pushed her truck briskly ahead of her. It was the quickest way to shop, and the easiest, really, because everything was so cheap. The A & P had their own brands of most things, and they were generally five or ten cents cheaper than in the good stores. The fluorescent tubes in the ceiling beat down on her as she pushed the cart along.

She picked up her milk and eggs and cheese in a few seconds — she knew exactly how much she wanted and what kind. There was a dumpy-looking bunch of women more or less in line around the dairy-section check-out counter. Most of them were beefy and sturdy, with heavy legs in thick rayon stockings and worn-down shoes. She pushed her wagon in among the group and waited, irritated that there were so many people shopping in the late afternoon. Two lines developed out of the group and she edged into the one on her left. She did not want to be left in the middle.

"That woman's not in line," someone said. The voice carried.

Clarissa kept her back turned. She shoved her little wagon abruptly into the line so there could be no mistake.

There was grumbling and muttering at this, and shifting of weight

from one meaty leg to another under the coarse black wool coats. They settled down and got used to having her where she wanted to be. She knew how to handle these German women. She'd lived in the German section for eight years.

So coarse, the women especially, stuffed full of pork and knackwurst and boiled cabbage. Always eating, always pushing people around. But Yorkville was cheap and with the money she saved on rent, they had bought a car and other things.

When she paid for the dairy products she bought a carton of cigarettes for herself and a half-pound Hershey bar for Elmer.

She stood in line at the meat counter. She stood waiting while the German women had the insides of animals sliced out and wrapped up — kidneys, gizzards, beef-hearts, sweetbreads. What the A & P needed was self-service in meats. Everything should be wrapped in advance.

The butcher called out her number.

Then she pushed around and picked up her staples. At a supermarket people took extra things from the open shelves and spent too much money. Clarissa limited herself strictly to the items on her list. She picked up five pounds of oranges for 39¢, in a red net sack.

She was a better manager than Elmer. She had kept the checkbook, and the budgeting, and in the third year of their marriage, when she realized they couldn't save any money, she'd gotten a job. The Bank paid Elmer very little. He had been there six years when she married him and was only making $56 a week. He had men under him, besides.

It was Clarissa, too, who started their life insurance. She took out two kinds of policies — one the regular kind where you had a fully paid-up policy after twenty years; and the other, which Elmer liked better, the kind advertised in the magazines, where you both retired at 65 and went to live in California on $200 a month and perhaps sold things to tourists on the side. Only — if they kept up the payments right through to 65 — they would get *three hundred and twenty-five dollars a month* for the rest of their lives. She was planning a further extension on the policy which would take it up to $350 a month. That would cost them a good bit more because they weren't as young as when they started the original plan.

They managed to live on Elmer's pay and spent hers to meet the premiums on the policies. Elmer's $64 a week kept them going pretty well in Yorkville. She was making $80 now, before the withholding tax. Ten dollars of her pay went to the government each week; that

was $520 a year. She knew perfectly well what it went for — airplanes, money thrown away in Europe, subsidies to the farmers. Subsidies to put butter and eggs in caves in Kansas and keep prices high at the A & P. With that $520 a year, they could have put their retirement policy right up to $375 a month.

The boy at the counter added 10¢ too much on her bill. She had caught him once before, but not until she added up the items at home.

Clarissa left the A & P. She handled the packages easily, carrying them down and across to First Avenue. She walked up four flights of stairs to their flat. There was no janitor, and no one cleaned the steps, but they weren't dangerously filthy, considering. The glass panes in the stairwell were caked with dirt and very little light got through. She had trained herself not to notice the smells — the mustiness, the stench of cabbage cooking — and went automatically up the four flights and around the four landings. There was a yellow toilet in the hall that the other three apartments on the floor used, but Elmer and she had had one put in, as well as a basin and a shower. They had made a bathroom by partitioning the "kitchen" of their railroad flat, which was strung out like box-cars, one room after another.

They were lucky to be up on the fourth floor where there was more air and less of the greasy soot, but then, in the summer, they were right under the asphalted roof. They stuck it out in their apartment, except for the two weeks every August they spent in Cleveland with her mother. On the first of November each year Clarissa sealed up the windows with heavy tape, and did not open them again till April. This held down the cleaning, and if it got too warm, they turned off the flame in their three new Sears Roebuck space heaters. They had no heater in their bedroom, and on cold mornings dressed in the bathroom.

Elmer got up before she did and cooked breakfast. Then he left for work and she did the dishes. She was at her desk at the agency at nine every morning, but Elmer, being a clerical supervisor, had to be at the bank ten minutes early.

She and Elmer got on very well. People thought Elmer a bit sluggish, but he was very much a man; she could vouch for that. He had a fine complexion — he was extremely fair and his skin was very white and clear. He had a tendency to be overweight which she fought by watching his diet. At first Elmer had refused to wear glasses — she could tell he needed them by the way he squinted at his newspaper — but now he had a really powerful, thick pair which were like little

magnifying glasses. He could not watch the television without them.

They were buying the video set on time, and they were the only people in the building who had it. The rest of the tenants were shopclerks, or petty concessionaires like the widow in the rear of their floor. It was Elmer who had first gotten the television "bug." He made such a fuss over it that she finally let him sign them up for the ruinous interest rate and the monthly installments. They used Elmer's Christmas bonus for the down payment.

But now Clarissa was as keen a television fan as anyone else. They sat down to it every night after the dishes were out of the way, Clarissa with her knitting or one of her books — *Selling Techniques in Mass Distribution,* or *Effective Media in Volume Merchandising.* Elmer stared straight ahead of him all evening and even watched right through the commercials, which fascinated him, while she picked up a few stitches on the sweater. There were often friendly little disputes — Elmer favoring the wrestling matches and sporting events while she preferred dramas — but these only made the evenings more interesting.

Then it would be time to go to bed, and Elmer would turn down the oil stoves and switch off the lights while she got herself ready in the bathroom. She had never seen Elmer except in his pajamas. She saw no reason for changing the rule now.

Elmer was an unusually sound sleeper. Clarissa, on some nights (even when she did not drink coffee), tossed and tossed. Her brain ran with worries, and plans for the future, and wondering how long it would be before they could increase their insurance again. Her restlessness never disturbed Elmer. He always awoke promptly at 7:15, without an alarm clock, got up quietly, shaved and dressed, made breakfast, and then aroused Clarissa. He had nine hours sleep every night.

When something had upset her — whether it was the woman at the A & P today or Mr. Cartwright criticizing her media selections for the *Lifebuoy* account — she didn't get to sleep for hours. She dozed, woke up, dozed again. Elmer, by her side, slept solidly through the night, dreaming of California, as he had for many years.

II

She must have slept a good long while, because when she awoke the room was full of light and the sun was high. It must have been balmy outside; it was warm in their unheated bedroom. For a minute,

she thought of breaking the seals on the windows and flinging them open. Then she noticed that Elmer was still in bed beside her. He had never failed to arise promptly at 7:15 in eight years of married life.

His back was turned toward her. She reached for his pulse, but couldn't find it, clamping her fingers over the underside of his wrist. But what if there were no pulse? She reached her arm across him and felt for his heart under the white broadcloth pajamas. There was nothing but soft flesh. She was about to cry for help, when she remembered there were different ways of telling. She took a mirror from her pocketbook and held it in front of his nose. It coated with vapor, and, reassuringly, in a regular rhythm. She rushed to the kitchen to see what time it was.

10:30!

She hammered at Elmer with her fists, but he did not budge. She wanted to light a match to him. She filled a glass with water and threw it on him. He rolled over, and looked up. She was panting. "Armistice Day," he said, and rolled back to sleep again, the wet pajama top clinging to his back.

She rushed to the telephone and called the office. No answer. But no one had told her. At Deere, Fisk and Wightman they never took those kind of holidays. Something must have gotten into Mr. Cartwright.

The front room was very hot. She shut off the oil stoves completely. She took a cold shower and made Elmer his breakfast. She turned the television set on for him and set up a card table in front of it for his plate.

"Elmer, you *must* get up." Elmer groaned. The water had done the trick; he was not completely asleep as yet. By dint of pummeling and shouting and literally rolling him over the edge of the bed she put him into his slippers and got him to the breakfast table, still in his pajamas. He was bleary-eyed. She slipped the powerful spectacles over his nose and twisted the dials of the television for brighter image definition. She poured his coffee. He was perspiring heavily, and the video set gave off extra heat. The sun beat down outside where they could hear the children playing in the street.

When she cleared his breakfast things, she found him asleep again in his armchair. They were running old movies on the screen. She snapped him to his feet and marched him to the bedroom so he could get dressed. She called to him from the kitchen to keep him from dozing off while he was putting on his shoes and socks.

"Let's go for a ride. We've never had the car out on the Parkway, Elmer."

It was warm outside, and springlike, though cooler than in their apartment. The sidewalks were crowded and there were many cars on the street, enjoying the fine Armistice Day weather. They had no trouble starting the car and soon they were a part of the mass of traffic lined up to turn onto the East River Drive at 96th Street. There was a lot of honking of horns, but the motorists were in a carefree, holiday mood. At last they got across to the Drive and hugged the right side of the road so Clarissa could watch the oil barges moving up the river. Elmer was a careful, methodical driver and she had no worries as the endless motorcade bore them on toward the approaches of the Triborough Bridge.

Their car was a '41 Chevvy they had picked up second-hand. Elmer had had the brakes relined, and the rings ground, and a new front spring put in, as well as a complete lubrication job. It didn't burn much gas for a nine year old car; they rolled along without any cares as to the expense of their outing. They were so pleased with the sensation of being on the open road that they decided they would drive next summer to Cleveland when they visited her mother. They had always taken the bus before.

The monumental approaches to the Triborough Bridge were only a foretaste of what awaited them in their first tour of the Parkway system. They found the broad expanse of the span, the ramps, and the viaducts breathtaking; they felt to a certain extent dwarfed by the massive yet graceful bulk of the engineering marvels over which their Chevrolet glided so easily.

Patiently keeping in line, they passed out of the Triborough ramps and beneath the overpass which carried the trains to Flushing. They went past La Guardia Field, with its circling, four-engined aircraft — all new to them — and finally reached the Parkway itself, where they found themselves surrounded by tall trees in the late stages of their autumn glory. Aside from the exhaust smoke in the air, Clarissa had all the sensations of being in the country without the trouble of taking hours to get there and then putting up with bad accommodations, poor food and inquisitive people. It was almost like sitting in one's arm-chair at home and watching a landscape flash by on the television screen. It would not be long, either, before color television would be generally available. The seat of the car was well upholstered, and she loved the sensation of tasting rural delights without the irritations and

discomforts that usually went with them.

It was a relief, too, to know that there were no troubles and problems waiting for her back at the apartment. All they had to do was open the door, flick on the lights and settle down comfortably for the evening, well-rested by their ride in the country. There were no babies waiting for her back home; no children to be washed and fed and put to bed; no questions for her to answer. She was free to come and go as she pleased and she did not envy the girls who had given up their jobs at the office to wear themselves out with housework. Clarissa had an automatic dishwasher and sent her laundry out.

It was none of her mother's business, either, whether she had a family or not. It was different in Cleveland, where living was cheaper and where you could get a colored girl to help out. Her mother had had seven children and three miscarriages, the last when she was forty-two. Clarissa made herself clear to Elmer on that point as soon as they were married. Not that she wouldn't want a child, but she would insist on her getting a real education, Vassar and all that, and they couldn't afford it yet. Perhaps if she could get into one of those new advertising firms that were always being started — if she was sure it was one that would go, and not fold up after a year or so.

The left rear wheel started to bump against the road. They had a flat.

The cars whizzed by. Elmer had difficulty even getting out on his side of the car, much less examining the flat tire, there was so much traffic. There was nothing in sight but stretches of parkland — lawns and trees — and ribbons of cars going both ways in double lanes, exhausting fumes. Not a gas station in sight. Elmer got back in the car and ran it up on the grass, grinding on the flat wheel. He got out his tools and set to work. Clarissa stayed in the car, noticing only the easy lift of the floor when the jack was raised, and the slow drop when later it was let down.

They went to the end of the Northern State Parkway, turned around, and headed back. The shadows lengthened and the light fell back to the west; the sky became a pale bluish gray. The cars were all going on their side of the Parkway now, and they seemed to be part of an endless double chain reaching all the way across Long Island to Manhattan. They passed a confusing succession of turn-offs — ramps that led through cloverleafs to great parkways crossing beneath their own: Cross-Island Parkway, Utopia Parkway, Whitestone Parkway, all jammed with automobiles. Their parkway de-

scended into a deep notch, bordered by stone walls and crossed overhead at regular intervals by arched stone bridges, on which the local traffic passed. Above them, above the embankment, were trees and suburban houses.

Their motor stopped.

Elmer pressed on the starter. Nothing happened. He looked at the gas gauge. Perhaps they should have checked the oil. They might not have any oil left in the crankcase to protect their engine. The horns blared fiercely around them. Clarissa got out so he could use the door on her side and not take any chances with the traffic. There was no grass border in the notch, and Clarissa stood momentarily on the concrete ledge rimming the road, her back to the stone embankment. Elmer opened the hood and started checking the oil, an old rag in his hand. A police car stopped behind them.

"I thought it might be my oil," Elmer said to the policeman. His oil was all right.

"Turn on your headlights," said the cop. They didn't work.

"It's your battery," he said, and Clarissa had to step out of the car once again while they got at the battery under the front seat. It was darker now and the cop had to stick his flashlight down over it. One terminal was covered with a sticky green mass. The cop took a knife out of his jacket and scraped away at the mess. It was all green paste; the terminal had corroded through.

"Don't you ever look at your battery?" he said, accusing them of negligence. The cop put a temporary link in for them and they went to the next gas station and changed it for a new one. By this time it was dark.

Coming back in the bumper-to-bumper Armistice Day jam, they had to go very slowly. The lanes of cars were endless and there was not much difference in the appearance of the road as they went along. They seemed to keep passing under the same bridges. Elmer kept steadily in line in the right hand lane and did not try to dodge in and out of the traffic. Again and again the lines came to a complete stop; he always left plenty of space ahead for any sudden developments. Clarissa could see the unhappy faces of the people in the other cars, women and children anxious for supper and home. The horns blew, and now and then there was the scraping of fenders and the noise of irritated voices up ahead. They passed cars broken down on the side of the road; whole families marooned helpless on Armistice Day while the choking traffic crept ahead. And when at last they reached

the approaches to the Triborough Bridge, she had, in a way, forgotten it existed. They moved obediently up the long ramps; gradually they were forced to the right until they were near the high concrete shelf of the runway.

When the side of the car scraped against it, grinding, she knew that Elmer had fallen asleep.

They were lucky there was no cop on hand. The fender, the running board and the door were all slightly bent. She didn't scold. She kept an eye on him until they turned off the Drive and into York Avenue and finally round the corner of their building. They got out and she saw they would need a paint job and some body work. They went up the four flights to their flat. There was a lot of cooking going on, and as they got to their floor, Mrs. Hauss, who lived in the rear flat, was just leaving the hall toilet. They did not greet her. Clarissa unlocked the burglar-proof latch and Elmer flipped the electric light switch. It was Elmer's night to cook dinner, but since he was so tired, she went into the kitchen and got out the hamburger meat herself. She lit the stove and went back into the living-room to check up on him. He was in his television easy-chair, but he had not turned on the set. He was fast asleep, his hands crossed over his stomach, his head hanging forward, his whole heavy body putting its weight forward against his knees.

Clarissa left him alone and went back in the kitchen. He would wake up when the smell of the broiling hamburger meat got into the living room. Meanwhile she got out some frozen string beans, milk, and ice cream for dessert. They would have to sell the car. It was impractical. It was no relaxation when you drove it in the country and there was no use having one in the city. You couldn't park. Next summer they would go to Cleveland on the bus as usual. Let the driver do the worrying for you. They would lie back in their reclining chairs and relax while the countryside sped by. They could get $400 for the car, and with that they could pay off the installments on the television. And the car insurance — they could get a refund for the eight months they hadn't used on their policy. Perhaps she could buy a Bendix. There was no point paying a laundry to do your wash when you could do it automatically at home.

She had to wake Elmer up when dinner was ready, and afterward, when the dishwasher had done its job, they settled down in their usual places, facing the set. She turned on a wrestling match for Elmer, but soon she saw the white film closing down over his pupils. She

switched to the Hollywood Theatre of the Air. There was a two-hour drama on Thursday nights, and tonight it was absorbing. There was one of her favorite stars playing in it; it was eleven o'clock before it was over.

She woke Elmer up and transferred him to his bed.

She made herself some Ovaltine so she could sleep and then slipped in beside him. She could not hear his breathing at all; his back was turned toward her.

Tomorrow she would be back at the office and Mr. Cartwright would be after those media reports. It would take her all day to get the classification in hand and start her eliminations. Tomorrow was Friday and they would get paid for a full week's work, regardless of Armistice Day. Her Federal Withholding Tax was $9.70 and her Social Security was 70¢. That would leave her with $69.60 take-home pay. She would deposit it in her 10¢-a-check account during lunch hour and get expense money from Elmer in the evening. Her take-home pay worked out to $280 most months.

In the months with five Fridays she got $350. Yet the payments on the two insurance policies came to $296.50 a month. This meant she had to keep a balance in the account to even things up, but even then she was not sure that it would work out right. Now if you pay $296.50 a month for twelve months you take $3550 out of the account in a year, and if you pay in $280 a month there is only $3400 coming in, but then there are the extra months, that is, the extra-*week* months, but how many of those are there? There are four thirty-day months in the year, and there are fifty-two weeks in the year. Now if you divide fifty-two by four you have thirteen months but there are only twelve months so you have four weeks left over. Now with four weeks left over there are four extra months — four extra-week months — which means four extra checks a month, rather, four a year, that is, four times $70 is $280; that makes a total of $1120. If you add you get the sum of the payments and there should be something left over; that is, after a year had passed, there should be some left over, *something* left of all that, if you added up the payments. . . . .

Beside her, they two being of one flesh, Elmer also was asleep. In his dreams the golden navel oranges of California flopped fat and lazy into his lap as he sat in the cool shade of his grove. He gurgled as below him, dazzling in the sunlight, the vast Pacific rolled in endless swells from the distant islands of palms, flinging itself everlastingly on the terraced shores of the coast of rest.

BERTOLT BRECHT:

A Little Organum for the Theater

Translated by Beatrice Gottlieb

Introduction

The following is an adumbration of an aesthetics which could be derived from a particular approach to theater developed in practice during the last few decades. In the occasional theoretical observations, polemics, and technical directions which I have published in the form of notes to my plays, I have touched the aesthetic aspect only incidentally and without special interest in the subject. This particular species of theater broadened or narrowed its social function, perfected or rejected certain artistic means, and established or maintained a place for itself in aesthetics when the question happened to come up. It did so either by disregarding the prevailing moral or aesthetic rules or by adapting the rules to its own purposes, according to the way the battle was going. It defended its predilection for social attitudes by pointing to social attitudes in generally accepted works of art, inconspicuous there only because they were accepted attitudes. It observed that everything worth knowing had been emptied out of the contemporary theater and interpreted this as a sign of decadence; it accused the markets of evening entertainment of having become a mere branch of the drug traffic. False images of the social scene on the stage (including those of naturalism so-called) drew from it a demand for scientifically accurate images. The tastelessness of the fare served up for the delectation of the eye and mind, concoctions devoid of intellectual content, drew from it a demand for the beautiful logic of the multiplication table. It scornfully rejected the cult of the Beautiful (which went along with a dislike for learning and a contempt for utility) particularly since nothing beautiful was being produced. The goal was a theater of the scientific age, and when its planners found it hard to borrow or steal enough from the arsenal of existing aesthetic concepts to keep the aesthetes of the press at arm's length any longer, they simply threatened "to develop an intellectual discipline out of the means of pleasure and to convert certain institutions from places of entertainment into organs of information" (Notes on *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagon-*

*ny**) — in other words, to depart from the realm of the merely pleasurable. Aesthetics, the heritage of a class grown depraved and parasitic, was in such a deplorable state that a theater had to win respectability as well as freedom of movement — if it preferred not to press its claim to be called "theater" but was willing to be *called* anything. Nevertheless, what was practised as the theater of a scientific age was not science but theater. With the innovations accumulated during the time of the Nazis and the war, when opportunities for practical demonstration ceased, it is now feasible to examine the place of this species of theater in aesthetics, or at any rate to indicate the outlines of a possible aesthetics for it. It would be too difficult to present the theory of *theatrical alienation* apart from an aesthetics.

It would actually be possible today to write an aesthetics of the exact sciences. Galileo spoke of the elegance of certain formulas and of the imaginative quality of experiments. Einstein attributes to the sense of beauty a function of discovery. And the atomic physicist, J. Robert Oppenheimer, praises the scientific attitude, which "has its beauty and which seems singularly suited to man's estate on earth."

Let us, then — though many people will regret it — retract our intention of departing from the realm of the pleasurable. Let us announce our intention of settling down in this realm — though even more will regret it. Let us consider the theater as a place of entertainment, as it should be considered in an aesthetics, and let us inquire what kind of entertainment we can accept.

August, 1948

1.

Theater consists in this: living images of historical or fictitious events taking place among men are placed before us, for the purpose of entertainment. This is at any rate what we mean in the following when we speak of theater, be it old or new.

2.

To be more inclusive we might add events between men and gods, but since we are only concerned with a definition of the minimum, these can be omitted. Even if we undertook to extend the definition in this way, the description of the most general function of theater as *pleasure* would have to remain. It is the noblest function we have found for theater.

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* Opera by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. Text and Notes in *Gesammelte Werke.*

3.

It has always been the task of the theater, as of every other art, to entertain people. This task confers on it its special value. It requires no excuse for its existence other than that it provides amusement — it must be amusing under all circumstances. It could by no means be raised to a more exalted position, be made a market for morality, for example. It must rather take care that it is not degraded, as it would be if it did not make morality pleasurable, that is, pleasurable to the senses; from this, of course, morality can only be the gainer. The theater should not even be expected to teach, at any rate nothing more useful than how to be pleasurably moved, either physically or spiritually. It must be allowed to remain something superfluous. Of course, this means that we live for the superfluous. Pleasures stand in need of defense less than anything else.

4.

Thus, what the ancients required of tragedy, according to Aristotle, was nothing loftier nor humbler than that it entertain the people. If it is said that the theater came from the realm of ritual, what is meant is that it became theater when it left that realm. From the mysteries it took nothing of the ritual *function* but only the pleasure associated with it, pure and simple. And the well-known Catharsis of Aristotle, the purification through terror and pity (or *of* terror and pity), is a cleansing which is effected not only in a pleasurable fashion but actually to the end of pleasure. To demand more of the theater or to interpret its function more broadly is to put too low a value on the end proper to it.

5.

Even to speak of pleasures on high and low levels is to confine art too narrowly. Art wishes to be free to operate as both high and low if it may thus be pleasing to people.

6.

On the other hand, the theater affords weak (simple) and strong (complex) pleasures. The latter, which we find in great drama, reach a climax rather like that of sexual intercourse, though they have more ramifications, are richer in fine adjustments, more contradictory, and richer in consequences.

7.

And entertainments in different ages were of course different, ac-

cording to the way men lived together. The tyranically governed demos of the Hellenic circus had to be entertained differently from the feudal court of Louis XIV. The theater had to furnish different images of men's life together — not merely images of a different way of life. but different kinds of images.

8.

According to the entertainment which was possible and necessary for the way men lived together at different times, characters had to be differently proportioned and situations placed in different perspectives. Stories may be told in very different ways: the Greeks could be amused by the inevitability of what was divinely ordained, ignorance of which was no protection against punishment, while the French could be amused by the graceful self-conquest which a courtly code of duty required of the world's great, and the English of the Elizabethan age could be amused by the self-contemplation of the newly liberated and exuberant individual.

9.

And it must be kept in mind that the pleasure afforded by images of such different sorts hardly ever depended on the degree of resemblance between the picture and the object depicted. The pleasure was disturbed very little or not at all by inaccuracy or even extreme improbability, so long as the inaccuracy had a certain consistency and the improbability remained of the same kind. The illusion of a story that developed convincingly, an illusion created by all manner of poetical and theatrical devices, was enough. We, too, gladly overlook such inconsistencies if we are allowed to "get in on" the spiritual cleansings of Sophocles, the sacrificial acts of Racine, or the general running amok in Shakespeare, which we do by trying to attach ourselves to the beautiful or powerful feelings of the chief characters in these stories.

10.

For of all the various modes of representing significant events among men which have been devised since ancient times and which were entertaining in spite of their inaccuracies and improbabilities, an amazing number still entertain us today.

11.

If it is easy for us to find delight in the images of so many different ages — something hardly possible for the children of the great ages themselves — should we not suspect that we have not yet discovered the special means of pleasure, the proper entertainment, for our own age?

12.

And our delight in the theater must have become weaker than that of the ancients, even if our way of living together still resembles theirs sufficiently for us to be delighted in *some* degree. We grasp the ancient works through a comparatively new process: namely, *empathy* (Einfühlung), which we cannot get from them in any large amount. Thus the greatest part of our delight is fed from sources other than those which must have opened up so powerfully to our ancestors. We feel compensated with verbal beauties, with the elegant handling of the plot, with passages which call forth independent ideas, in brief, with the non-essentials of ancient works. These are precisely the poetical and theatrical devices which conceal discrepancies in the stories. Our theaters are no longer able or willing to tell these stories clearly, not even the not-so-ancient stories of the great Shakespeare. That is, they are not able or willing to make the "knotting-together" of the events credible. According to Aristotle the plot is the soul of the drama. We think so too. We are more and more disturbed by primitive and careless images of men's life together such as are found not only in ancient works but also in contemporary works which are made according to ancient recipes. Our entire mode of enjoyment is getting out of date.

13.

Such discrepancies diminish our delight in the theater. The reason is that our relationship to what is represented is different from that of our ancestors.

14.

If we look about for a direct kind of entertainment, for a comprehensive and pervasive pleasure which our theater might be able to create for us through images of men's life together, we have to think of ourselves as children of a scientific age. Our life together as human

beings (and that means *our life)* has been given new dimensions by the sciences.

15.

Several hundred years ago several men, in different countries but in communication with each other, made certain experiments by means of which they hoped to wrest nature's secrets from her. They belonged to an industrial class in the already powerful towns, and they handed their discoveries on to men who utilized them for practical purposes without expecting from the new sciences much more than personal gain. Industries which had used the same methods for nearly a thousand years now expanded tremendously. In competing with each other they bound many localities together and brought great masses of people together from all sides. Organized on a new basis, these people undertook gigantic production. Humanity soon demonstrated powers it had previously hardly dared dream of.

16.

It was as though humanity were now for the first time making a conscious and united effort that the planet on which it lived might be a habitable place. Many of its resources, like coal, water, and oil, suddenly became treasures. Steam was harnessed to move ships. A number of little sparks and the quiver of frogs' legs disclosed a natural power which produced light and carried sound across continents. Man looked about him with a new vision to see how he could make use of what he had looked upon for a long time yet had never adapted to his comfort. His environment changed rapidly from decade to decade, then from year to year, then almost from day to day. I am writing now on a machine which was unknown at the time of my birth. I travel in new vessels at a speed my grandfather could not conceive of; in his time *nothing* moved so fast. And I am lifted in the air, as my father never was. I spoke to my father a continent away; but only with my son did I see the moving pictures of the explosion at Hiroshima.

17.

The new sciences have brought about a tremendous transformation in our surroundings, and, even more important, tremendous *possibilities* for further transformation. Nevertheless, we cannot say that their spirit has had a decisive effect on all of us. The reason that the new modes of thought and feeling have not yet effectively penetrated the

great masses of the people may be found in the fact that the sciences, so successful in exploiting and subjugating nature, were prevented by the class which owed its rule to them — the bourgeoisie — from functioning in another field, one which is still in darkness, namely, the field of human relations. Everyone was dependent on the exploitation and subjugation of nature, yet the new processes of thought which made it possible did not at the same time reveal the reciprocal relationship among those who carried on the work. The new approach to nature was not applied to society.

18.

Actually, the reciprocal relations among people have become less apparent than ever. The mammoth common undertaking in which they are engaged seems to separate people more and more, and an increase in production brings about increase in misery. Only a few profit from the exploitation of nature, and the reason they profit is that they also exploit human beings. What might mean progress for all is advantage for a few. And an ever increasing part of production is devoted to increasing the means of destruction in mighty wars. In these wars the mothers of all nations, pressing their children to them, examine the skies in horror for the deadly inventions of science.

19.

To the people of today their own undertakings are like the unpredictable natural disasters of ancient times. The bourgeois class — owing its ascendancy to science and turning that ascendancy into rule by making itself the sole beneficiary of science — knows very well that if the scientific vision were directed to its own undertakings this would mean the end of its rule. Thus the new science, which was founded about a hundred years ago and which occupies itself with human society, was founded on the struggle between rulers and ruled. Since then there has been something of the scientific spirit in the lower depths, among the new class of workers for whom large-scale production is the very stuff of life: the great catastrophes are regarded from their point of view as undertakings of their rulers.

20.

Science and art have a common ground, however, since both exist to make the life of men easier: the one *sus*tains and *main*tains, the other *enter*tains. In the coming age, art will find entertainment in the new

productivity which can so much improve our sustenance and maintenance and which, once it is not interfered with, may itself be the greatest of all enjoyments.

21.

If we wish to give way now to this great passion for being productive, what must our images of men's life together look like? What is the productive attitude toward nature and toward society which we children of a scientific age can accept with pleasure in our theater?

22.

The attitude is a *critical* one. With respect to a river it consists in the regulation of its flow; with respect to a fruit tree it consists in the grafting of fruit; with respect to locomotion it consists in the construction of ships and planes; with respect to society it consists in revolution. Our images of men's life together will be made for river builders, fruit growers, shipbuilders, and social revolutionaries. We invite them to our theater, and we ask them not to forget their joyful interests while they are there. For we hand the world over to their brains and hearts; they will change it as they think best.

23.

The theater can adopt such a free attitude only if it surrenders itself to the most powerful currents in society and associates itself with those who must be the most impatient of men since they are to bring about great changes. If nothing else, the simple wish to develop our art according to the spirit of the time will drive our theater of the scientific age out into the suburbs, where, without barriers, so to speak, it will place itself at the disposal of the broad masses of people who produce much and live with difficulty. They can be usefully entertained in the theater with their own great problems. They may find it hard to pay for our art. They may find it hard at first to understand the new mode of entertainment. We shall have to study carefully what they need and how they need to have it presented. But we can be sure of their interest. These very people who seem to be so out of touch with the natural sciences are out of touch with them only because they are kept away from them. They will adapt themselves to the sciences by themselves developing and practicing a new social science. In this way they are the real children of the scientific age. The theater of this age cannot be set in motion unless they are the

moving force. A theater which makes productivity its chief source of entertainment must also make productivity its theme, and with particular zeal nowadays, when a man is in every way prevented by other men from being productive, that is, from picking up a living, from being entertained, from entertaining others. The theater must engage itself with reality so that it can and may present effective images of reality.

24.

This, however, makes it easy for theaters to come as close as possible to being centers of instruction and information. Even if they should not bother with many important matters, if these cannot contribute to the pleasurableness, theaters are still free to find pleasure in instruction and investigaton. Out of practical images of society which are in a position to influence society, the theater makes a thoroughly enjoyable game. It presents to the builders of society the experience of society, past and present, in such a way that the feelings, insights, and impulses which the most passionate, the wisest, and the most active of us get from the events of the day and the century can be *enjoyed*. Let these people be entertained by the wisdom which comes from the solution of problems; by the anger into which pity for the oppressed would do well to change; by respect for those who respect humanity, that is, for the friends of men; in short, by everything which delights those who are productive.

25.

This also permits the theater to let its spectators enjoy the special morality of their age, which stems from productivity. In making criticism — that is, the great method of productivity — *amusing,* the theater finds nothing in the moral realm which it *must* do, and a great deal which it *can* do. Society can derive pleasure even from the asocial, as long as on the stage it has vitality and stature. For it often exhibits powers of understanding and manifold abilities of great value, though of a destructive nature. Even the catastrophic bursting forth of the flood can be freely enjoyed in all its majesty by society, if society can become its master; the flood is then in society's grip.

26.

For such an undertaking we can scarcely rely on the theaters as we find them today. Let us go into one of these buildings and observe

the effect that theater has on its spectators. Looking around, one sees rather immobile faces in a peculiar condition. Their muscles seem to tighten in severe strain whenever they are not relaxed in severe exhaustion. These theater-goers have little truck with each other. They sit together like men who are asleep but having unquiet dreams, because, as the people say of those who have nightmares, they are lying on their backs. True, they have their eyes open. But they don't watch, they stare. They don't hear, they are transfixed. They look at the stage as if bewitched, a type of response which has its origin in the Middle Ages, the time of witches and clerics. Watching and hearing are *activities,* sometimes enjoyable ones, but these people seem to be released from all activity. They seem to be *people to whom something is being done.* The better the actors work, the higher the degree of transport in which the spectators seem given over to indefinite but strong feelings. Thus we who do not like "transport" might wish the actors to be as bad as possible.

27.

As for the world therein depicted, the world from which segments have been cut to feed these moods and movements of feeling, it comes forward, put together out of a few wretched ingredients — a piece of cardboard, a morsel of mimicry, a scrap of text — well, we can but admire the theater people. With this feeble copy of the world they can move the feelings of their well-attuned spectators much more than the world itself can.

28.

In any case we should excuse the theater people. They have no opportunity to provide the pleasures which are bought from them with money and fame by means of more accurate images of the world. Nor could they successfully create *in*accurate images in a less magical fashion. On all sides we see their ability to represent men. Especially the scoundrels and minor characters show traces of a knowledge of men and can be distinguished from one another. But the central characters have to be kept general so that the spectator can more easily identify himself with them. And in any case all traits must be taken from the narrow province within which everyone can say at once, "Yes, that's how it is." For the spectator has certain definite expectations, just as a child has when it sits on one of the wooden horses of a carousel: the feeling of pride that it can ride and that it has a horse; the pleasure

of being carried past other children; the adventurous dreams of being chased or of chasing others, etc. In giving the child all these experiences the similarity of the wooden mount to a horse plays no great part. Nor does the confining of the ride to a small space. All that matters to the spectators in these theaters is that they can exchange a contradictory world for a harmonious one, a world not exactly known for one that can be "dreamt up."

29.

Such is the theater that we find around us, and it has shown that it is in a position to transform our promising friends, whom we call the children of a scientific century, into an intimidated, credulous, bewitched crowd.

30.

True, for about half a century they have been enabled to see somewhat more faithful images of men's life together, such as characters who rebelled against certain social evils or even against the whole structure of society. Their interest was so strong that they temporarily accepted extraordinary limitations in language, plot, and intellectual range; for the breeze of the scientific spirit reduced the customary "charm" of theater almost to nothing. The sacrifice was hardly rewarding. The improvement of the images damaged one pleasure without putting another in its place. The field of human relations became visible but it was not clearly *seen*. Feelings generated in the old, magical way necessarily remained the old kind of feelings.

31.

Now as before the theaters were places of entertainment for a class which limited the scientific spirit to the field of nature, not daring to hand over to it the field of human relations. And the tiny proletarian part of the audience, only inessentially and uncertainly strengthened by apostate brainworkers, still demanded the old kind of entertainment, which lightened the burden of its fixed way of life.

32.

Let us go on. Obviously we are engaged in a struggle. Let us struggle then! Haven't we seen how lack of faith has moved mountains? Isn't it enough to have found that something has been kept from us? A curtain covers many things: let us raise it.

33.

The theater as we know it shows the structure of society (represented on the stage) as not subject to the influences of society (in the audience). Oedipus, who has sinned against several principles which prop the society of the time, is executed. The gods take care of that; and they are beyond criticism. The great individuals of Shakespeare who carry the star of their fate in their breast move irresistibly through their futile and deadly runnings amok; they kill themselves. Life, not death, is obscene when they fall; the catastrophe is beyond criticism. On all sides men as victims! Barbaric subjects of amusement! We know that barbarians have their art. Let us make another kind.

34.

How long shall our souls, taking leave of our heavy bodies under a veil of darkness, steal into other dreamlike souls on the podium to share raptures denied to us ordinary folk? What kind of a liberation is it, when at the end of all these plays, an end that is happy only for the spirit of the age (a fitting providence, peaceful order), we experience a dreamlike death sentence which punishes raptures as though they were ravings? We crawl to *Oedipus* because the taboos are still there, and ignorance does not protect us from punishment. To *Othello* because jealousy still disturbs us and everything depends on possession. To *Wallenstein* since we must be free for the competitive struggle, and loyal lest it come to an end. These incubus-habits are also promoted in plays like *Ghosts* and *The Weavers* even though society — the milieu — is presented as more of a problem. Since we have to accept the feelings, insights, and impulses of the chief characters, we receive, socially speaking, no more than the milieu provides.

35.

We need a theater that makes possible the feelings, insights, and impulses permitted by the historical context in which the actions at times take place. But we also need a theater that employs and generates ideas and feelings capable of playing a part in the transformation of the context itself.

36.

The context must be delineated in its historical relativity. This means a break with our custom of stripping the different social structures of past ages of their differences so that they all look more

or less like our own. Our age acquires through this operation an air of having always existed, and thus of being eternal. We, however, want to leave undisturbed their distinguishable qualities and keep in mind their transitoriness, so that our own age may also be perceived as transitory. (For this purpose local color and folklore naturally cannot serve. They are employed by our theaters precisely for the purpose of bringing out even more strongly the similarities in the conduct of people of different epochs. We shall indicate the theatrical means later.)

37.

Let the characters on our stage be socially motivated, and motivated differently according to their epoch. Then we make it difficult for our spectator to get inside the characters. He cannot simply feel: "That's how I would act," but can say at most: *"if* I had lived under such conditions." And if we perform plays of our own time as historical plays, then the conditions under which he acts may likewise appear strange to him. This is the beginning of criticism.

38.

Historical conditions should, of course, not simply be thought of as dark forces (backgrounds). They have been created by human beings and maintained by them — and will be changed by them. They are formed out of what happens.

39.

If a person makes a response in terms of his own historical epoch and would respond otherwise in other epochs, isn't he simply *everybody?* Yes, indeed, everyone responds differently according to his times or his class; if he lived at another time, or were still young, or lived on the dark side of life, he would unfailingly respond otherwise. But he would respond just as emphatically, and just as everyone in the situation at the time would. The question arises whether there are further differences in responses. Where is the man who is alive and unique, that is, the man who is not exactly like the other people in his situation? It is clear that the theatrical image must bring him to light, and it will do so when the element of contradiction is incorporated into the image. The "historicising" image will have something in common with sketches which show traces of other movements and traits around the finished figure. Or think of a man making a speech in a valley, in the course of which he changes his mind or speaks in

sentences which contradict each other, so that the echo, sounding at the same time, presents all the sentences at once in conflict with each other.

40.

Such images demand of course a style of acting which keeps the powers of observation free and agile. The powers of observation must, so to speak, be able to take up readily fictitious additions to our basic structure. This is done by turning social motivations into ideas or substituting for them other motivations. Through this procedure actual modes of behavior are made to appear somewhat unnatural. And thus actual *motivations* in turn are no longer "natural" but can be dealt with.

41.

This is the way the river builder looks at a river. He sees it together with its original bed and many a fictitious bed which it might have had if the angle of incline or the amount of water had been different. And as he sees a new river in his thoughts, the socialist hears in *his* thoughts new modes of discourse among the laborers along the river. Our spectator in the theater should be made aware of these sketchy lines and echoes in incidents which occur among such laborers.

42.

The style of acting which was tried out in the Schiffbauerdamm Theater in Berlin between the first and second world wars, in order to present such pictures, rests on the Alienation Effect. An alienating image is one which makes a circumstance recognizable and at the same time makes it seem strange. The ancient and medieval theaters alienated their characters by using masks of people and animals, and the Asiatic theater still uses musical and pantomimic Alienation Effects. These effects undoubtedly prevented empathy: yet the technique rested on hypnotically suggestive foundations rather more than less than the technique by which empathy is produced. The social aims of the ancient effects were entirely different from ours.

43.

The old Alienation Effects remove the thing which is imaged entirely from the influence of the spectator, make it appear unalterable. The new effects have nothing bizarre about them; it is an unscientific vision which immediately stamps the alien as bizarre. New alienations

should only remove from occurrences which may be influenced by society the seal of familiarity which nowadays prevents them from being tampered with.

44.

What has not changed for a long time seems to be unchangeable. We are always coming across something which is so obvious that we do not bother to understand it. What human beings experience is to them "accepted experience." The child, living in a world of adults, learns how things are in that world. He easily gets to know how things tend to turn out. If someone is bold enough to wish for something out of the way, he wishes for it only as an exception. Even if he should recognize what "providence" veils his eyes with as something which society has been provident in giving him, still society would have to remain completely beyond his influence — this mighty collection of creatures like himself, like a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. And the thing which could not be influenced would be something familiar to him — and who is wary of what is familiar? In order that he may be able to call all this into question with as much zeal as he now accepts it, he would have to develop that alien vision with which the great Galileo looked at a chandelier swinging like a pendulum: he was amazed at its oscillations, as though he had not expected them to be like that, as though they were not self-evident; hence he came to the formulation of physical laws. This vision, as difficult as it is productive, must be stimulated by the theater's images of men's life together. The theater must astonish its audience, and it does so by means of a technique which alienates what is accepted.

45.

And this technique permits the theater to use the method of the new science of society, dialectical materialism. This method, in order to show how society is susceptible of change, treats social conditions as though they were "on trial" and follows them up in all their contradictoriness. Nothing exists for it unless it is changing and is thus in disharmony with itself. All this also pertains to the feeling, opinions, and attitudes with which people express their current mode of living together.

46.

It pleases our age, which has brought about so many and various transformations in nature, to understand things in such a way that

we may have an effect on them. We say that man contains much and therefore much can be made of him. He need not remain as he is. He is to be regarded not only as he is but also as he might be. We must use him not as a starting point but as our goal. This means that it is not enough for me simply to put myself in his place; as the representative of all of us I must put myself at some distance from him. This is why the theater must *alienate* what it shows.

47.

To produce Alienation Effects the actor had to forget everything he had learned about enabling an audience to feel its way (Einfühling) into his creations. Since his intention is not to put his audience into a trance he should not put himself into a trance. His muscles must be relaxed. For example, if he magically carries with him the eyes and heads of his spectators when he turns his head and tightens the muscles of his neck, any speculation or agitation aroused by this gesture can only be weakened. His speech should be free of the parson's singsong and of cadences which lull the spectators into unconsciousness. Even when portraying someone who is possessed he ought not to seem possessed himself. Otherwise how could the spectators find out *what* possesses the possessed?

48.

At no point does he allow himself to be completely transformed into the character. If someone said, "He didn't play Lear, he was Lear," that would be a damning judgment. He has only to *show* the character. Or, to put it better, he has to do more than merely *experience*. This does not mean that he must be cold when he portrays passionate people. It is only that his own feelings should not be entirely those of his character, lest the feelings of his audience become entirely those of the character. The audience must have complete freedom.

49.

The actor is on the stage in a double capacity (as Laughton and as Galileo), and the portraying Laughton is now swallowed up in the portrayed Galileo. This manner of acting has been called "Epic." This means nothing more in the end than that the real, the profane event is no longer veiled. Laughton is really standing on the stage and is showing us how Galileo seems to him. Once he astonishes the audience in this way it will naturally not forget Laughton, even if he at-

tempts a complete transformation. If he does attempt it, his own opinions and emotions will disappear, completely merged in the character. He will have made the opinions and emotions of the character his own, and a single criterion for these opinions and emotions will emerge, a criterion which he will make ours. To prevent this misfortune he must make the very act of showing artistic. Take an imaginary case: in order to give independent consideration to the one half of the role, that of *showing,* we can provide it with a gesture. Imagine that the actor is smoking and puts his cigar down from time to time to demonstrate some further trait of the fictitious character. If we remove every connotation of abruptness from this picture, and do not think of inactivity as indolence, we have before us an actor who would be very good at transmitting our thoughts or his own.

50.

Another change is necessary in the actor's rendering of the image. And it too makes the occurrence more "profane." Just as the actor should not deceive his audience into thinking that not he but the fictitious character is on the stage, so he should not deceive them into thinking that what happens on the stage has not been rehearsed but is happening for the first and only time. Schiller's distinction — the rhapsodist treats his events as completely past while the mime treats his as completely present* — is no longer applicable. It should be apparent in all his acting that "at the beginning and in the middle he already knows the end."* And he should "thus maintain a calm freedom throughout."* In a living portrayal he tells the story of his character, and he knows more than the character does. He does not regard the "now" and the "here" as fictions made possible by the rules of drama but distinguishes them from yesterday and from another place. In this way the knotting-together of the events can become clear.

51.

This is particularly important in the portrayal of mass events or where the environment changes radically, as in wars and revolutions. The spectator can then receive an impression of the total situation and the total course of the action. For example, while he hears a woman speak he can imagine that he hears her say something else, let us say a few weeks later, and hears other women at the same time in other places say other things. This would be possible if the actress acted as though the woman had lived through the whole epoch and now, out

* *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Schiller,* Stuttgart, 1829. III, p.388 (Number 396).

of the memory of what she knew would happen afterwards, chose from among all her utterances to utter whatever was important for this moment. For what is important here is what *became* important. Such an alienation of a person as "precisely this person" and "precisely this person at precisely this time" is possible only if the illusion is not created that the actor is the character and that the performance is the event.

52.

Now, however, in this connection a further illusion had to be relinquished: that *everyone* behaves as a particular character does. "I do this" became "I did this," and now "He did this" must become "He did *this,* not something else." It is an oversimplification to make action exactly fit character and character exactly fit action. The contradictions evidenced by the actions and characters of real people cannot thus be exhibited. The laws of social mobility cannot be demonstrated by ideal cases, since "impurity" (contradictoriness) is inherent in mobility. It is only necessary — but this is essential — that something like the conditions of an experiment be set up, that is, that a control experiment is always conceivable. In general, society should be treated here as though it does what it does experimentally.

53.

Although empathy with the character may be used in rehearsal (it is to be avoided in production), it must be employed as only one of several methods of observation. It is useful in rehearsing because, though it is greatly overused in the contemporary theater, it has nevertheless led to a very refined delineation of character. Still, it is the most primitive kind of empathy if the actor asks only "How would I feel if such and such happened to me? How would I look if I said this and did that?" instead of asking "How have I heard someone say this or seen someone do that?" By drawing on all manner of things from here and there, he builds a new character who could have taken part in the story. And there is something more. The unity of the character is to be depicted in a manner that makes individual characteristics contradict each other.

54.

Observation is an important part of the art of acting. The actor observes his fellowmen with all his muscles and nerves in an act of im-

itation, which is at the same time a process of thought. For through mere imitation there would emerge at the most the observed phenomenon. This is not enough, for the original says what it has to say too softly. To get from a mere copy to an *image* the actor must look at people as though they were showing him how to do what they were doing, in brief, as though they were telling him to *reflect* on what they were doing.

55.

Without attitudes and intentions no images are possible. Without knowledge nothing can be demonstrated. How should one know what is worth knowing? If the actor does not want to be a parrot or an ape he must acquaint himself with the knowledge of the time as to men's life together, and this by fighting in the class struggle. This may seem to some an abasement of his art, which, once salary is arranged, is raised to impressively high levels. But the most impressive crises of the human race take place on the earth, not in the air, on the outside, not in the mind. No one can stand above the struggling classes, since no one can stand above humanity. Society has no common mouthpiece as long as it is split into struggling classes. For art to be unpartisan means only that it belongs to the ruling party.

56.

Thus the choice of a point of view is another important part of the art of acting. And it must be chosen outside the theater. Like the transformation of nature, the transformation of society is an act of liberation, and it is the joys of liberation which the theater of a scientific age should bring into being.

57.

Let us next consider how the actor, from this point of view, should read his part. It is important that he should not "comprehend" too quickly. If he arrives immediately at the natural cadence of his text, the most comfortable way of speaking it, then he should not regard the utterance as a natural one but should hesitate, draw on his general attitudes, take into consideration other possible utterances and, in brief, behave like someone who is astonished. This is not only to prevent grasping a certain character too soon, that is, before the actor has recorded all the utterances, especially those of the other characters (which means that a great deal has gradually to be crammed into the char-

acter), it is also of the greatest importance in bringing into the building of the character the element of "not that, but this" on which so much depends if the audience, which represents society, is to be able to see how it may influence the events. Also, every actor, instead of using as "the simply human" only that which suits him, must reach out toward what is particularly unsuited to him, toward the special. And along with the text he must memorize these first reactions of his, provisos, criticisms, bewilderments, so that they are not destroyed in his final creation by blending with each other but remain intact and perceptible. For the character and everything else must not seep into the audience but shock it.

58.

The actor must learn his part at the same time as the other actors learn theirs. He must build his character together with the others. For the smallest social unit is not the human being, but two human beings. In life too we build and grow in reciprocal relationships.

59.

Here something can be learned from the bad practice of our theaters. The leading actor, the star, is helped to push himself forward by being *served* by all the other actors. He makes his character frightening or wise by forcing his colleagues to make theirs afraid or attentive, etc. In order to give everyone an equal advantage and thereby serve the plot, the actors should change parts with each other at rehearsals, so that the characters can get what they need from each other. It is good for the actors, too, to see their characters copied or even differently conceived. If a character is played by a person of the opposite sex it will reveal its own sex more clearly; if it is played by a comedian, either tragically or comically, it will acquire new facets. Above all, by helping to develop the other characters or at least by stepping into the place of their portrayers, the actor establishes the decisively social point of view out of which he produces his character. The master is the kind of master his slave allows him to be, etc.

60.

Naturally, innumerable steps toward the building of a character have already been taken by the time he moves among the other characters of the play. The actor should have memorized the conjectures which were suggested by the text. Now, however, he learns much more

about himself from the treatment given him by the other characters of the play.

61.

The province of the characters' attitudes toward each other we call the *province of gesture*. The attitude of the body, vocal, and facial expression are determined by a *social gesture:* that is, the characters insult each other, compliment each other, teach each other, etc. Among attitudes of people toward each other there even belong those that seem quite private, like utterances of bodily pain in sickness, or of religion. These gestures are for the most part very complicated and contradictory; they are not capable of being rendered in a single word. Though the theatrical image requires intensification, the actor must take care not to lose any of this gestural material. He should intensify the whole complex.

62.

The actor masters his character by critically following up its diverse utterances as well as those of the characters with whom he is involved and of all other characters in the play.

63.

In order to come closer to the gestural content of theater let us go through the opening scenes of my recent play, *Galileo*. Since we want to see how the various utterances throw light on each other, we will assume that this is not your first acquaintance with the play. It begins with the morning ablutions of the 46-year-old Galileo, interrupted by rummaging in books and a lecture to the boy Andrea Sarti on the new solar system. Must you not know, if you are to do it, that we will close with his evening meal at the age of 78, when this student has left him for ever? He is terribly changed then, more terribly than by the mere passage of time. He stuffs himself with chicken in uncontrolled gluttony. Nothing else is on his mind. He has disgracefully given up his professorship as though it were a burden — he who once drank his morning milk quite casually, full of eagerness to teach the boy. But does he really drink *quite casually?* Isn't his pleasure in the drink and in the bath the same as his pleasure in the new ideas? Do not forget: he thinks for the sake of sensual pleasure! Is this good or bad? Since you will find nothing in the play to indicate that it is prejudicial to society, and especially since you yourself are, I hope, a

brave child of the scientific age, I advise you to portray it as something good. Make this very clear, for many terrible things will come to pass. That the man who is here welcoming the new age will be forced at the end to call upon this age to cast him off, to disown him — that is connected with this trait of his. As for the lecture, you may decide whether it is a simple case of one whose heart is full and whose mouth runs over, so that he would talk about it to anyone, even to a child, or whether the child must first worm the information out of him by showing interest, knowing the effect that another's interest has on him. There may be two people who cannot restrain themselves; the one can't keep from asking questions, the other can't keep from answering them. Such a fellowship would be interesting, for it will one day be evilly broken. You will probably want to present the demonstration of the earth's revolutions fairly quickly, since it won't be paid for. There now appears a well-to-do foreign student who puts a monetary value on the scholar's time. He does not seem to be very interested, but he must be served, since Galileo is destitute. The latter will stand between the well-to-do student and the intelligent one, and, sighing, choose. He cannot teach the new student much; so he lets himself *be* taught *by* him. He finds out about a telescope which has been invented in Holland. In his own way he puts the interruption of his morning's work to use. The rector of the university comes. Galileo's petition for a raise in his stipend has been refused; the university is not willing to pay for physical theories what it pays for theological theories. Since he is after all engaged in research on a low level, it demands of him something of practical use. You will note in the manner in which he offers his treatise that he is accustomed to refusals and reprimands. The trustee reminds him that the Republic guarantees the freedom of research, even if it pays poorly. He replies that he can do little with this freedom if he does not have the leisure provided by a good salary. Here you would do well not to make his impatience too imperious, or you will fall short in your portrayal of his poverty. For shortly afterward you will find him thinking ideas which need some explanation. The prophet of a new age of scientific truths considers how he can cheat the Republic by offering the telescope as his own invention. You will be amazed to find that he sees in the new discovery nothing but a few scudi. He proceeds to examine it only so as to appropriate it for himself. Go further and you will discover in the second scene that, while selling the invention to the Senate of Venice in a speech degraded by lies, he has

almost forgotten the money because he has discovered in addition to the military significance of the instrument an astronomical significance as well. The merchandise that he has been forced to produce — that's what we can call the telescope — shows great potentialities for the very research which he had to interrupt in order to produce it. When, during the ceremony in which he receives unearned honor and is fawned upon, he tells his learned friend about his wonderful discoveries — do not ignore how theatrically he does it — you will find his excitement much deeper than it was at the prospect of monetary gain. Even if his charlatanism does not amount to very much in this light, it still shows how determined this man is to find the easy way and to employ his reason in low pursuits as well as high. A more significant test is to come, and does not every failure make the next one easier?

64.

In displaying such gestural material the actor masters his character by mastering the *plot*. Only from this, the distinct total event, is he able almost at one bound to reach the final characterization which combines all the individual details. If he has done everything to astonish himself at the contradictions in the various attitudes, knowing that in this way he will astonish his audience, the plot in its entirety allows him to fuse the contradictions. For the plot, as a limited event, yields a certain meaning; that is, among many possible interests it satisfies certain ones in particular.

65.

Everything depends on the plot. It is the heart of the theatrical presentation. From what happens *between* people comes whatever may be discussed, criticized, changed. This is true, above all, when the special person brought forward by the actor has ultimately to adapt himself to more than simply the events in the play; these events will be much more shocking if they affect a particular person. The great undertaking of theater is the plot, the total complex of all the gestural occurrences, comprising the communications and impulses which should now go to the making of the audience's pleasure.

66.

Each separate event has a basic gesture. *Richard Gloucester sues for the hand of his victim's widow. By means of a chalk circle the*

true mother is discovered. God makes a wager with the devil for the soul of Doctor Faust. Wozzeck buys a cheap knife to kill his wife with. Etc. In the grouping of the characters on the stage and the movement of the groups the requisite beauty is achieved chiefly through the elegance with which the gestural material is brought forward and set out for the scrutiny of the audience.

67.

Since the audience is not invited to throw itself into the plot as into a river to flounder vaguely about hither and yon, the individual events must be so knotted together that the knots are striking. The events should not follow each other without being noticed. On the contrary one must be able to come between the events and pass judgment. (If the *mystery* of the casual connections were itself interesting then even this circumstance would have to be sufficiently alienated.) The parts of the plot must thus be carefully related to each other, each part having its own structure, a play within a play. This end is best accomplished by means of titles like those in the preceding section. The titles should contain the social "points." At the same time, however, they should say something about the desired manner of presentation. The right tone could be suggested by the title of a chronicle or a ballad, a newspaper headline, or a chapter heading from a book on manners. A simple alienating form of presentation is, for example, discovered simply through manners and customs. A visit, the treatment of an enemy, the meeting of lovers, agreements of a social or political nature can be brought forward as though one were simply portraying a custom which prevailed in certain places. Portrayed in this way a unique and particular incident acquires an odd look, because it seems universal, something that has become a custom. The very question whether it or anything about it *should* become a custom alienates the event. The poetic historical style may be studied in "panoramas"* on fairgrounds. Since *alienating* also means *making famous,* certain incidents may simply be portrayed as famous incidents, as though they have been generally known for a long time, down to every detail, and as though pains were being taken not to go the least bit against tradition. In brief, many ways of telling a story are conceivable, some known, some yet to be discovered.

* "Panorama" in this technical sense is a series of little drawings or paintings which the ballad singer points to as he sings. (Translator's note.)

68.

What is to be alienated and *how* depends on the interpretation to be made of the event as a whole. Here the theater should pay strict heed to the interests of its time. Let us take as an example of interpretation the old play *Hamlet.* In view of the bloody and dark period in which I am writing, a period of criminal ruling classes and of a widening distrust of reason, which is constantly being misused, I believe its plot may be read as follows: The time is warlike. Hamlet's father, the king of Denmark, has slain the king of Norway in a victorious war of aggression. As the latter's son, Fortinbras, prepares for a new war, the Danish king is also slain, by his brother. The brothers of the slain kings, now themselves kings, prevent the war by allowing the Norwegian troups to cross Danish territory for a war of aggression against Poland. Now however the young Hamlet is called upon by the ghost of his warlike father to avenge the foul deed perpetrated against him. After some hesitation about repaying one bloody deed with another bloody deed, he is almost determined to go into exile, but on the coast he meets young Fortinbras, who is on the way to Poland with his troops. Overwhelmed by the warlike example, he turns back* and in a barbaric mélée brings about the death of his uncle, his mother, and himself, leaving Denmark to the Norwegian. In these occurrences the young man (who is, however, already somewhat corpulent) is seen making inadequate use of the new reason which he studied at the University of Wittenberg. Reason is at cross purposes with him in the feudal enterprises to which he has returned. Over against unreasonable practice his reason is quite impractical. He falls a tragic victim to the contradiction between such reasoning and such deeds. This way of reading the play — which may be read in more than one way — could to my mind be of interest to our audience.

* The fourth scene of the fourth act ("A plain in Denmark") may be considered the turning point. Here we see Hamlet "in the flesh" for the last time before his return. Here is the great monologue in which he succumbs to the war drums of Fortinbras: "O, from this time forth / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth." The letter to Horatio in the scene after next informs us that Hamlet has nevertheless boarded the ship for England, but there is nothing there to be acted. His report to Horatio of the king's plot against him (cf. II, 2) does not give the performer an opportunity to make anything of the decision to go to England. (The interpretation of *Hamlet* is a good example of what *interpretation* means. That is, it is necessary to emphasize certain things and underemphasize others, to rearrange, to cut, and even occasionally — not in this case — to add.) (Author's note)

69.

Every advance, every emancipation from nature which, by renewed productivity, has led to a reorganization of society, all those turnings in new directions which mankind has taken to better its lot — all invest us with a feeling of triumph and confidence, whether they are portrayed in literature as successful or unsuccessful. They provide us with pleasure in the possibility of change in all things. Galileo expresses this pleasure when he says, "It is my opinion that the earth is very noble and wonderful, in view of so many and various transformations and generations which incessantly take place upon it."

70.

The interpretation of the plot and its implementation through suitable alienation is the chief job of the theater. And the actor need not do it all unaided, even though nothing may be done without reference to him. The plot is interpreted, produced, and exhibited by the theater in its entirety — by the actors, the stage designers, the make-up men, the costume-makers, the musicians, and the choreographers. They unite their arts in the common undertaking without actually giving up their independence.

71.

The general gesture of showing, which always accompanies what is being specially pointed out, is emphasized by musical addresses to the audience in the form of songs. The actors should therefore not "make a transition" to song but should clearly distinguish it from the rest. It is best to help the actor here with theatrical devices, such as changes in lighting or the use of titles. The music for its part must throughout oppose being merged with the rest. The merging that is usually required of it reduces it to the level of a stupid handmaiden. It should not "accompany" except as a commentary. It should not be satisfied to "express" by simply taking over the mood which the incidents suggest. Thus, for example, Hanns Eisler admirably manages the knotting-together of the incidents by using triumphant and threatening music for the masked procession of the guilds in the carnival scene in *Galileo*. The music indicates the rebellious reaction of the lower classes to Galileo's astronomical theories. In a similar way, the cold and unemotional manner of the singer in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

when describing the rescue of the child which is being presented in pantomime on the stage exposes the horrors of a time in which motherliness can be suicidal weakness. Music can make a place for itself in many ways and entirely independently. In its fashion it can take a stand as to the themes of the play. It can also be simply a means to variety in the entertainment.

72.

Just as the musician wins back his freedom by no longer having to create moods which make it easy for the audience to give itself over indiscriminately to the occurrences on stage, so the stage designer wins a great deal of freedom if in constructing his sets he no longer has to aim at the *illusion* of a room or a district. Indications are enough. But they must have something historically or socially more interesting to say than the actual environment has. In the Moscow Jewish Theater, *King Lear* was alienated by means of a structure which resembled a medieval tabernacle. Caspar Neher set *Galileo* in front of projections of maps, documents, and art works of the Renaissance. In the Piscator Theater, John Heartfield used in *Haitang Awakes* a background of inscribed flags which could be reversed and which noted changes in the political situation of which the people on the stage were occasionally unaware.

73.

Choreography too once more takes on tasks of a realistic nature. It is an error of recent date that dance has nothing to do with images of people as they really are. When art mirrors life it does so with special mirrors. Art does not become unrealistic if it alters proportions. It is unrealistic only if the proportions are altered in such a way that the spectator who uses art for practical insights and impulses finds he is at a loss in real life. Stylization should not eliminate what is natural but exaggerate it. At any rate a theater that takes everything from gesture cannot do without choreography. The mere elegance of a movement and the charm of an ensemble are alienations, and pantomime is an aid to the plot.

74.

Thus let us call in all the sister arts but not in order to produce

a composite art work *(Gesamtkunstwerk)* in which they all surrender and lose themselves. They should, together with the art of acting, promote the common task each in its own way. Their intercourse with each other consists in reciprocal alienation.

75.

And here it should be remembered once more that their task is to entertain the children of a scientific age, meaningfully and *cheerfully*. We Germans especially cannot remind ourselves too often of this last word. With us everything easily slips into the abstract and the intangible, so that we start talking about a world view after the world itself has disappeared. Even materialization is little more than an idea among us. We turn sexual pleasure into matrimonial duties. Pleasure in art serves "culture." And by learning we do not mean finding out about things in a cheerful fashion but having things shoved down our throats. Nothing we do has any joyful endeavor about it. To show ourselves off we do not point to how much fun we had but to how much sweat it cost us.

76.

It remains to speak of the presentation to the audience of what has been built up in rehearsals. Underlying the actual performance should be the gesture of *handing over a finished product.* What comes before the spectator is everything that has not been rejected. It has all been gone over a good deal. The finished images must be rendered in complete wakefulness if they are to be received in wakefulness.

77.

Images must retreat before what is imaged, namely, men's life together, and the pleasure we take in the perfection of images should be enhanced by a higher pleasure in the fact that the rules nowadays set forth in this life together are treated as provisional and imperfect. Thus the theater allows the spectator to be productive beyond merely watching. In his theater he may enjoy as entertainment the horrible and never-ending labors which sustain and maintain him together with the horrors of incessant transformation. Let him be productive here in the easiest way. For the easiest mode of existence is in art.

SRINIVAS RAYAPROL:

Poems for Jamini Roy

A Question of Old Rains

Yellow and blue
is a way of flight
The apple is true
and her arm a night
long sadness. Her eyes
a white fish of form
and her lip a lie
that the worm
forgot to chew;
for the apple became
an egg and the two
eyes being the same

Yellow and blue
is a colorless silence
The bird is new
and the brown fence
does not surround
her fish white eye
A green round thigh
breaks on the yellow
of the egg
The earth being slow
in turning to dust

The Blue Woman

On my wall in my room
is a blue woman whom
I have fixed in the midst
of a dance

fish for eyes and her hands
painted red (for in my country
they like the color). Her feet
big and weighted by metal rings

Her lips lowered in all modesty
A white ring in the only showing
ear. A yellow dress which is all about
Naked yet and shy

But after sleep and after day
when the moon is quiet and dark
and my mind full of walls
my head full of white

is it the blue woman awake?
Her silence released and all around
Her movement still and her smile
within my closed eyes

Is it the wall, the woman
or the inclosed smile?

VIRGINIA BLISH:

Anachronisms: Watch and Woman

The dream's distortion veils its fear,
The ring lost substitutes divorce
And lays misfortune at mischance's door;
Nor doer nor observer knows to pierce
The seeming for the source.

Misborne on a highway as a raft on dust
The lady travels faster than she can
And absent in a cliff or cave or jungle
Minded, to degree, wonders that she ran.

She lifts her wrist to see, unknowing
She will murmur, 'How fast are we going?'

No eloquence more honest.
The dream a key but bent
And loss the spirit's leanest
Sign of discontent. No eloquence
More fearful than the slip of tongue.

A Kind of King

Many-tongued, tough-minded, and intent
He means to go a way some others went
No way but hard, no weapon but his heel
And head, no quarter, no appeal

Circe and the cyclopedic wonder
Divert him in the category blunder
Piggish joy in acorns is no joke
Will nightly tilt with flailing oak

Behind him ruined trees, beyond a forest to be done
Self-flayed in all indulgence but this one

Man's pilgrimage foregone on meeting friends: a swift sus-
Urrus of whis-whispering sibilants for each puss.

No royal road to the dominion: learning.
Kingship of cats is also worth the earning.

DONALD JENKS:

Prodigal Son: Pioneer

When it was time to say, "Father forgive me!"
he shouldered his axe and rifle and walked away.
To each owner of cleared ground his own wife
and his own sty.

A country of opportunity indeed—
this patrimonic giant's beard of trees
which a man might hack and burn till he died,
in a patricide called good.

Brothers in the blink of sin, we are gathered together
to raise these squared logs upon other logs.
A time comes for a man to have his own sons
and his own dogs.

A Samson wise to Delilah and her tricks,
the price of a razor would buy another axe.
For cattle he preferred the ox,
unfit for such sins.

But nowhere orphaned free: the immortal father
howled in the hounding wind in the forest limbs,
pelting the logs with moulted feathers
of the eagle that took our lamb.

THOMAS B. BRUMBAUGH:

Song of Experience

There must be pigeons roosting in the barn.
I heard them scratching and scraping
Across the tin roof this morning.
There were bright and gray, clean feathers
Flecking the horse's stall,
And corn I drop there one day, is gone the next.
I hope I shall find them, like fat watery jewels,
Set along the brown rafters
When I go to look for eggs this evening;
And that a shot or two
Will break and spill them softly in the hay.

Trio

For Carlo Crivelli

Har das stone
Or metal cylin derplink
Dashed clean silver carved
To crisp blue knifedge cracked.

For Salvador Dali

Bitter, pink and almost firm,
Almost always reticent,
Almost blue-gray languishment,
Reverie de pachyderm.

For Horace Pippin

So much of warmth is gained
And fire,
By biting through the seed,
It vindicates the deed.

JOHN M. BRADBURY:

Ransom As Poet

Now that more than ten years have passed since John Crowe Ransom last published a poem, and almost twenty years separate him and us from the distracting issues of Regionalism and Agrarianism, it becomes possible to examine his poetic achievement with some objectivity. Some recent discussions demonstrate a still current source of distraction: the personal charm of the man and of the somewhat perverse critic-philosopher. Despite the efforts of Ransom himself and of the New Criticism, such implied identifications of the poet with the man and the theorist remain common, and perhaps inevitable.

The "personal heresy," as C. S. Lewis has called it, is especially tempting in Ransom's case, since the poetry itself is so richly endowed with personality. But Ransom, as critic, is insistent upon the essential anonymity of the poem — witness his essay on *Lycidas*. His theoretical position requires a full measure of aesthetic or psychic distance as a prime condition for artistic control. In his own poetry the principle operates generally through use of dramatic method (derived originally, it would appear, from an early interest in Browning). Many poems are presented through a *dramatis persona,* more through an aloof and unidentified observer. Even the impersonal and the "I" poems imply an extra-Ransomic personality which determines the point of view and, either directly or indirectly through dramatic irony, the tone. The personality which emerges from the poetry as a whole is a product of these tones or attitudes — not their sum, any more than a man's personality is merely the sum of his traits. This poetic personality has its affinities, direct and devious, optative and real, with that of the man, but it is certainly other.[1]

There is more warrant for importing Ransom the theorist direct into the poetry, for his work is always Classical, in the sense that it remains always under the control of his rational processes. Furthermore, Ransom's prose theories appear directly and indirectly in the verse quite regularly, and certain poems are illuminated by a knowledge of his philosophical and critical ideas. It must be insisted, however,

[1] One should not, therefore, discard facts of biography and history, as some New Critics advise. Such facts influence, often decisively, the development of the poetic personality.

that none of Ransom's successful poems is essentially idea. They are tones, attitudes, or, as I prefer to say, personalities in themselves, for which the ideas are carriers.

The attitude which lies most deeply imbedded in Ransom's poetry is one which, as philosopher, he early characterized as "ironic." This irony, he said, is predicated on a "mature" philosophic dualism, arrived at through disillusion with romantic pantheism. Young Ransom insisted confidently that irony "is the ultimate mode of the great minds," allowing the philosopher to be "aware sharply and grimly, but not too painfully, of the constant involvement of life with death." As it pervades the poetry, this position manifests itself in basic attitudes and tones. First, it guarantees the detachment which for Ransom is the enabling act of poetry. Further, it provides ambiguity, unresolved balance or tension. And, third, it offers "stoicism" with which to face nature's blind indifference to human desires and purposes. It should be noted that for all the references which Ransom as philosopher makes to "original sin" and the "fallen" state of mankind, his conception of good and evil is based on that of Classical humanism. "Goodness and evil," he says in 1930, "mean only tractibility or intractibility of objects to our desires." The prime evils of the poetry are decay and death, and the "stoic" attitude of the poet that of one who recognizes them "sharply and grimly," but can still love nature "without desire."

Corollary to these major attitudes, subsidiary characteristics develop in the poetry. From the detachment of philosophic "irony" springs a more conventional ironic wit. In the early poems the effects are often harsh or coy, but, gradually refined and tempered with fuller human sympathy, the wit produces brilliant results in the mature work. At the same time, the poetry assumes a ceremonious formality, which, however it delights in mocking itself, is a serious and important attitude. It is ceremony, the philosopher insists, which preserves man from brutalization, and the form, the vocabulary, and often the content of the poems reflect his belief. Finally, from the desireless love of nature, which the author of *God without Thunder* equated with the "aesthetic attitude," arises a quasi-religious sense of fidelity to the quality of things in their full particularity. Since it was this attitude which led Ransom from Classical scholarship into his absorption with poetry, it is not surprising that it forms the nucleus of his aesthetic theory.

Ransom's first volume of poetry, *Poems about God* (1918), was

admittedly a *tour de force*. He "went to work to treat rather systematically a number of the occasions on which [the term God] was in use with common American men . . . sincerely and spontaneously." These occasions include a wrestler's "By God!" of triumph, God helping Mother bake pies, and taking back a Sunday dinner in the form of vomit in order to feed His birds, as well as God aiding the sick, giving "an office to my knees." Essentially God is regarded as a human creation, a construction of mythic order by means of which man can personalize, and thus realize, a sense of "ultimate mystery," joyfully, indignantly, or however.

These poems, introduced by the breath-stopping "The Swimmer," seem original and promising enough to have excited more attention than was accorded them — only Christopher Morley in America and Robert Graves in England greeted them enthusiastically. There was something of Hardy, something of Frost, perhaps a distant echo of Browning in these strange little vignettes, so flavored with local color and fantasy; but the voice was new and the control at times remarkable.

The general failure of these poems — and they are largely failures — is one of tone and, especially, of pose. To achieve his detachment, the poet too often dons homespun or overalls. He wishes, as his introduction puts it, to avoid the "amiable Southern accent" of his predecessors, but equally to shun intellectualism — Ransom had been a Rhodes Scholar and was teaching — and ministerial dogmatism — his father was a preacher. The pose of bucolic *naiveté* provides ample opportunity for irony, but not always for poetry. The poems are, as a rule, under-keyed. When God aids Mother with her pies, the effect is closer to James Whitcomb Riley than to Rilke whose God shows the "hundred artisans" a "new skill." Ransom's flat tone cannot bear the intimacy. Here as elsewhere, the flatness verges on the coy. This tendency leads, furthermore, to a Frostian archness in the behavior of animals, angels, and God Himself.

Only in the rare cases where a more formal incognito is adopted does the tone carry the implications successfully. "The Four Roses," in which the stance is that of a self-righteous Puritan, deserves to be rescued from the oblivion to which Ransom has assigned it with the rest of this volume:

> Four sisters sitting in one house,
> I said, these roses on a stem
> With bosoms bare. But wayfaring
> I went and ravished one of them.

So one was taken. But the three,
They spread their petals just the same,
They turned no decent pale for grief,
They drew no fragrance back for shame.

The canker is on roses too!
I cried, and lifted up the rod
And scourged them bleeding to the ground.
All, all are sinners unto God.

Despite some awkwardness, this poem carries its irony successfully through a complete framing within its point of view, something the poet never achieves with the rustic pose.

Throughout this volume there are felicities in diction and imagery: a fever "Will fiddle on his bones"; occasional injections of the flavored archaisms which distinguish the later poems: "so vengeant for wine and summer song," "shrew his splendid features out of shape"; and a considerable sample of the "elegant" vocabulary on which the poet will ring so many subtle changes: "gallant," "valiant," "dainty," "sweet." But little here predicts the linguistic and tonal control of *The Fugitive* poems.

When the first issue of *The Fugitive* appeared, Ransom was five years beyond the latest poetry in *Poems about God,* yet the opening "Ego" of that issue shows little advance. There is still a stridency that results from forcing a pose, though the pose now is more congenial. "Ego" is signed, like Ransom's other poems in the first two issues of the magazine, with the pseudonym, Roger Prim. At this period, all of the Fugitive writers — probably from their association in group meetings with Dr. Sidney Hirsch, an amateur etymologist among other things — were thoroughly conscious of pseudological possibilities. Ransom's *nom de plume,* which may be translated as "the fastidious one famed for his prowess with the spear," had a peculiar appropriateness, for the poet was writing now in the habit of a precisely accoutred knight-errant of learning and the arts, with spear leveled to prick the balloons (if the anachronism be pardoned) of vulgar belief and taste. In "Ego" the spear is brandished somewhat too arrogantly. The realistic detail is still crude and out of key:

So I take not the vomit where they do
Comporting downward to the general breed.

Furthermore, at the imaginative level, nothing poetic occurs; we have only a metered expression of prose sentiments, distinguished chiefly

by *avant-garde* presumption and complacency.

But Ransom's art developed rapidly during the period of *The Fugitive*. Before the end of the first year he was printing such finished poems as "Necrological," "Epitaph," and "Fall of Leaf." By 1924 he could collect a thoroughly representative volume of verse, *Chills and Fever*.[2]

Ransom's sudden maturation came about under the stimulus certainly of the magazine project and very probably of T. S. Eliot — the latter through the agency of a young and rebellious associate on *The Fugitive* staff, Allen Tate. Tate "discovered" Eliot in 1922 and shortly thereafter, he says, "began an impertinent campaign in Eliot's behalf in the South." In July, 1923, Ransom published his first, and most violent, attack on Eliot's work. It seems hardly coincidental that this attack followed Tate's assertion in *The Fugitive* that "doubtless none assails the authenticity of his [Eliot's] impersonal and increasingly abstract art, though some may not care for it." For the authenticity of Eliot's art was precisely what Ransom as critic questioned, since *The Waste Land* failed to achieve any true "organization of experience." And the critic added a warning to any "young artist . . . not to think that his synthesis of experience is worth as much as an old one's."

The effect of this new stimulation appears in two volumes of poetry, *Chills and Fever* (1924) and *Two Gentlemen in Bonds* (1927), which together represent Ransom's major work as a poet during the *Fugitive* years, and in five later pieces included in the *Selected Poems* (1945). The mature poetry, if we exclude the late "Painted Head" and the later "Address to the Scholars of New England," is very much of a piece. It is modest poetry in the sense that it attempts no grand synthesis in the manner of Hart Crane or Ezra Pound, and makes no dramatic break with the formal tradition in the manner of Hopkins or Eliot. The memorable poems are brief dramas or dramatic lyrics, "having," to quote the author in *The Fugitive,* a "form and content based closely (as a general thing) on the tradition."

The primary distinction of this poetry is one, not of philosophy, but of flavor or personality. But the total impressiveness of the achievement is lost if the poems are regarded — and they generally are — as discreet bits of personal flavor. A complete and integrated personality develops through Ransom's work, and it is projected dramatically in the form of a special, strange and exciting world. This world has

[2] "Plea in Mitigation" in this volume is a mellowed version of "Ego," in which occurs a reference to the abandoned pseudonym: "And no man's bubble 'scapeth his sharp thorn."

mystic aspects, aspects of an old and a new South, and of a fabulous nursery world inhabited by monsters and articulate animals. In the main, it is a surprisingly blue, airy place to hold so much death and promise of death. It is peopled with many bird-like females — fluttering girls and twittering ladies — and tall girls walking proud in their precarious beauty. It contains gay children and dead children, animals knowing and perverse. There are numerous gallant gentlemen, both real and mythic, lost or "stoic"; old men wise and frustrate; and an occasional merchant, by definition corrupted. Finally, there are young couples straining both together and apart or "orbited nice" in a painful equilibrium. It is, in the poet's words, a "perilous and beautiful" world, through which chilled and feverish beings walk in dignity, poised at any moment to break into screams.

On one level, the world of these volumes must be seen as the symbolic projection of a dying way of life, stricken in the midst of its charm. The sense of loss, or "declension," is most explicitly defined in "Old Mansion" and "Antique Harvesters." The former describes a decayed "Southern manor" which has "expired sweetly as Nature." Not at all "ignoble," "if its peacock *was* a pigeon," it retains beauty, but can endure little longer even as an exhibit. The poet is visualized as already a foreigner to the ante-bellum version of Southern culture, an observer depressed at his exclusion but inevitably committed to a less congenial world, where, as "Philomela" puts it, "It goes not liquidly for us."

"Antique Harvesters," the scene of which is the "bank sinister" of Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, exploits an image of autumn yellowness. The pattern is already familiar from "The School" of *Poems about God,* where the poet finds himself in "a wilderness of autumn," "Sealed in a yellow tomb." Now the yellow is itself fugitive:

> But grey will quench it shortly — the field,
> men, stones.

The dominant color tone of the mature poems is blue, clear Hellenic blue, symbolic of the ante-bellum cultural ideal. The late autumn yellow of that ideal's decline forecasts the winter grey of its foreseen death.

But the domination of blue does not make an idyll of life in Ransom's world at any stage. On its second level, the symbolic extension is to modern life as a whole. The theme here is that which, since the early twentieth century, at least, has largely set the tone of Anglo-American poetry: the increasingly scientism and commercialism of

our age has cut off man from his once simple and direct relation to nature, to other men, and to ultimate values. America, "this other Thrace," is farthest gone from the "Attic" ideal. A number of the poems project this dilemma in terms of "ironic dualism." "Man without Sense of Direction" dramatizes the situation in a protagonist who "cannot fathom nor perform his nature." His "curse-hung head" is filled with abstract "perfect Forms," and "uncouth/ Demonstrations of joy" in nature offend "the ear of the fervorless youth." "His doom is upon him," and even the passion of "the loveliest," his bride, cannot "kiss that harried one/ To peace," for he has no "cause, time, nor country."

Other poems deal with the dilemma at various stages and in various circumstances — the late "Prelude to Evening," in many ways Ransom's finest poem, is the most intimate and intense version. But the title sonnet sequence of *Two Gentlemen in Bonds* treats it in fullest detail. The active man, Paul, delights in nature and physical sensation, but, as his times demand — here Renaissance — he plays the mercenary game and accepts the ruinous conventional standards by which the active man must live. Meanwhile his counterpart, the philosophic idealist, keeps to his rat-infested tower, defies the world, and is able to retain only his bleak integrity and hopes of death. These two men, like the Christ and Antichrist of "Armageddon," represent the equally untenable positions into which modern man is forced. In Eliot's language, they illustrate "dissociation of sensibility," or the disjunction of thought and feeling (see Tate's account of Jefferson Davis), or of fact and idea (see Warren's *All the King's Men*).[3]

This second, or psycho-sociological, level of Ransom's poetry is directly related to the third, or philosophical, level; for the duality of thought and feeling in man reflects, as a special instance, the basic duality in the constitution of things. Thus, even the bluest world where most of Ransom's characters dwell in some pride and dignity is a precarious one. Its Edenic atmosphere is subtly poisoned, and all of its inhabitants are driven inevitably to taste of the forbidden fruit. Even the gayest of the "blue girls" in her heedless innocence is making directly for the fateful tree. There she will learn knowledge of the harsh realities of the human condition. She will learn that she, a creature avid of life, is faced with the "gentleman in a dustcoat"; that she, beautiful in her twirling skirts, must look forward to the decay of beauty. Loving, she must learn of love's equivocations and

[3] This theme has dominated all Fugitive writing, including the Agrarian tracts. Warren was the first to comment on it in relation to Ransom's poetry in a fine essay, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Jan., 1935.

its "chasms." Being a woman, she may not fully understand how "desperate our cases" are, or conclude with John Black that

> We are one part love
> And nine parts bitter thought;

but she will soon send off venomous letters to her lover and stand, to watch them go,

> hot as fever
> And cold as any icicle;

or "in terror [flee] from the marriage chamber," "dream unlawful dreams," and "waken full of [her] own screams."

For the most part, Ransom's characters are exhibited to us in the precarious stage of innocence or of experience still unabsorbed; few of them have, like Mithridates, developed tolerance for the ubiquitous poison. The poetic personality, therefore, can observe from its ironic remove, and comment from the advantage of a superior position. Meanwhile the tang of the personality itself has flavored everything.

In its broadest aspect this personal flavor has been described by various critics as: "wrinkled laughter" (Morley), "acid gayety" (Van Doren), "detached, mock-pedantic," "wittily complicated" (Jarrell), "ambiguous and unhappy" (Winters), "suave," "mixed," or simply "ironic." All these epithets are justifiable with the exception of the "unhappy," which the poetic aloofness immediately disallows. (It is just this aloofness, by the way, which lifts Ransom's poetry above the sense of personal desperation which the poetry of his fellow-Fugitives, Tate, and Warren, are likely to exhibit.)

Epithets can do little justice to the subtle variations of Ransom's tone, and analysis can do little more than direct attention to elements and instances in artificial isolation. Objectively we must speak of a complex produced by diction, formal structure, and what is best described as modulation. The frequently anthologized "Here Lies a Lady" — not Ransom's best poem, but a typical one — will serve as instance. I quote the first and final stanzas:

> Here lies a lady of beauty and high degree.
> Of chills and fever she died, of fever and chills,
> The delight of her husband, her aunts, an infant
> of three,
> And of medicos marvelling sweetly on her ills.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Sweet ladies, long may ye bloom, and toughly I
> hope may ye thole,

> But was she not lucky? In flowers and lace and
> mourning,
> In love and great honour we bade God rest her soul
> After six little spaces of chill, and six of burning.

Superficially the tone of this elegy is close to that of Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat," scandalously close, the pious may find. But from a supra-human perspective, a lady-cat parallel is justifiable — both pets and well pedigreed, decorative, ineffectual. In both cases the poets combine a certain raciness of rhythm with elaboration of language to produce an effect of light mockery. But here the similarity ends, for Gray turns his incident into a moral fable, while Ransom's poem preserves its aesthetic and moral distance to the end. That is to say, whereas Gray steps out of his narrative to appear in person, smiling and wagging his finger at his audience, the poet in Ransom preserves his separation, abandoning omniscience only to step anonymously into the ceremony. To neither is the protagonist of real concern; to Ransom's poet, however, the ritual is quite serious, the preservation of forms, the tribute to the non-utilitarian values of beauty and innocence. (Note the excessive piling up of formal tribute, far beyond any conceivable desert, in the final lines.)

Critics, and especially the distinguished contributors to the special Ransom issue of *The Sewanee Review* (Summer, 1948), have been fascinated by the "elegance" of Ransom's diction. Brooks traces parallels to Miltonic language, Matthiessen to Biblical and to "the old-fashioned country expression" of the South; Stauffer speaks of "medieval diction," and Lowell of "the language of Henry James." Evidently the sources of this style are too numerous for profitable exploration. There is, however, a basic idiom, or rather there are two basic idioms which constantly invade one another's precincts to produce tonal shifts and contrasts. Both of these languages wear a patina or formality, even artificiality, consonant with the evocation of a mannered culture. The "elegant" surface effect guards the poet's detachment against the invasion of personal passion — "a self-protective rhetoric," Jarrell calls it.

The two strains of diction are essentially those which T. S. Eliot has described as splitting apart in the seventeenth century, toward Milton on the one hand, and toward Dryden on the other: the style of "magniloquence" and that of "wit." With Ransom, the magniloquence, harking back to Spenser primarily, is always mocking, or, to use Brooks' phrase, a "parody of the grand style." The lighter the mood, as a rule, the more nearly does the language approach the

pure mock-magniloquent. "Armageddon," for example, beginning on a gay note, immediately asserts a Spenserian rhetoric:

> Antichrist, playing his lissome flute and merry
> As was his wont, debouched upon the plain.

The witty Caroline strain is adequately illustrated in "Here Lies." But neither style long remains pure. Not only do they borrow from one another, as "Here Lies" borrows the archaic "thole"; but each is spiced with various types of modernisms, from the street slang of "let 'em have it" to nursery "moos" and "clack clacks", or to fine neologisms, like the proud young bosoms "poutering by."

The last stanza of "Here Lies" exhibits not only the diction under perfect control but the subtler effects achieved by modulation. The Elizabethan courtliness of address and the conventionality of the succeeding courtesy are in one of the variants of the basic idiom, just as the implied flower metaphor in "bloom" is a regular variant of Ransom's basic woman-bird comparison — "The Innocent Doves" is the subtitle for the feminine section of *Two Gentlemen in Bonds*. The harshness of the world which awaits innocence might have been suggested by a sharp change of tone (Eliot's "'Jug Jug' to dirty ears"), but Ransom manages a subtler shift by carefully preserving tone and rhythm and echoing with alliteration and assonance. "Toughly" and "thole" slip by, as it were, over the heads of the auditors, as a discourtesy may pass in a formal receiving line with the preservation of polite tone. The very pedantry of the Old English word aids in its tonal disguise, and the poet immediately discounts fatal inquiry by the brightly colloquial question: "Was she not lucky?" The question is, of course, tipped with the same barb, but this time the easy geniality is the disguise. One imagines pretty listeners murmuring conventional "Wasn't she?'s" before comprehension dawns. The whole flavor of this passage, and Ransom manages many like it, is that of a social game played by a perfectly mannered gentleman on a sophisticated level just above that of his audience.

The characteristic sprightliness of this verse does not invalidate Matthiessen's comment that Ransom's poetry is keyed to "a speaking rather than a singing voice"; or Lowell's, that it has the "distinction of good conversation." However gay the rhythm, the poet is always speaking (when his characters are not), "not caroll[ing]." A "singing voice" — even an "organ voice" — can be a dubious asset for a dramatic poet, and particularly for one without vatic pretensions. But Ransom's is a truly poetic voice in that it is master of a wide variety of

traditional metrical effects. He uses Skeltonics, dipodics, colloquial blank verse, closed couplets, and ballad variations with an ease and freedom that comes only through assured control.

If he has a special mastery, it is in his use of the final short line. "Judith of Bethulia," "To a Lady," "Eclogue," and "Tom, Tom" employ the device effectively, but its triumph is "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter," where its unexpectedness, its faint disappointment and jar, sharpen the pathos to an extremely delicate poignance:

> There was such speed in her little body,
> And such lightness in her footfall,
> It is no wonder that her brown study
> Astonishes us all.

One of Ransom's later poems, "Painted Head," must be considered as a separate achievement. One of three fine poems produced in 1934, after five years of absorption in theology, aesthetics, and Agrarian controversy, "Painted Head" seems written as an exhibit in metaphysical poetry. As such, it should accompany his essay of the same year, "Poetry: A Note in Ontology," in which he declares the "metaphysical" the ultimate mode of the greatest poetry. An elaborated conceit ("developed so literally that it must be meant"), the poem has, as the critic requires, "the courage of its metaphors."

The controlling conceit of the poem is drawn directly out of the critical Ransom's war against abstraction in behalf of a recovered "world's body." A smiling portrait head serves as a striking image of the "dark severance" of mind from body enforced by a scientistic world. Contributory metaphors pile up: the head is "a capital on no / Column," a flower cut off from its "body bush" or "faithful stem," a widower, an "iron acropolis." "Beauty is of body," the poet insists, and the body bears the head,

> Not to the glory of tyrant head but to
> The increase of body.

Even the head alone needs "bodiness to colorify" — and now the metaphors reach a climactic boldness — "the big blue birds" (eyes), "sea-shell flats / And caves" (ears), and "hyacinthine hair."

The poem, furthermore, abounds in metaphysical wit. Plays on the head and its severance lead even to the decapitation of sentences, in three cases the body of the sentence being severed from the understood subject, "head." Research scholars are "historian headhunters"; the ordering of the portrait was "capital irony"; the flesh having been

"vinegarly traduced," a head becomes a "hard egg . . . shrunken to its own deathlike surface"; and there are notable plays on the historic custom of head-rolling for treason.

Structurally and tonally, indeed from any intellectual standpoint, "Painted Head" is a brilliant achievement. If it finally lacks the moving compulsion of Donne, Herbert, Marvell, Traherne, or Edward Taylor at their best, it is the very abstraction of the anti-abstractionist theme that determines the difference. The instructive paradox here is one that applies to others of the Fugitive group influenced by Ransom's controlling idea. Allen Tate's novel, *The Fathers,* for example, suffers when the insistence on the abstractionism theme deprives characters of free life and converts them into abstractions.

"Painted Head" is certainly a special case, but it is not an anomaly in Ransom's poetic production. Like his final poem, the verse essay, "Address to the Scholars of New England," it marks a late stage in the increasing dominance of intellectualization over "thing-content." But Ransom's poetry has long been notable for its often complex and highly sophisticated, but always logical intellectualism. Theoretically Ransom's accent has been placed on the "irrelevant tissue" of poetry as its distinguishing mark, but there are no logical irrelevancies in his poems. The imagery is always under strict control; overtones are precisely limited and consonant; there is no strain to force language beyond its legitimate powers, no vagueness, nothing slipshod or loose. His metaphors are not characteristically a taking to wings, but a domestication, a conversion downward — death is "a gentleman in a dustcoat," the traveled scholar an "amphibious crocodile," women birds, a mortal wound a "puncture," Christ a Diomede. The sharpest effects are achieved by understatement.

Poetry of this sort, with its consciousness of intention, its tight control of nuance, inevitably lacks something in suggestibility. Ransom's late theoretical formulation of his dualism finds an "id" element in poetry through which imagery of the irrational unconscious is tapped. It is precisely this suprarational ingredient that his poetry lacks; for Ransom the poet has fundamentally Classical prepossessions that no theoretic requirements can alter. (It should be noted here, however, that the extensive use of "myth," "metaphysical," and religious terminology in the critical writings and especially in *God without Thunder* is easily misinterpreted. All such terms in Ransom betray a rational, rather than a suprarational, reference ultimately.)

Paradoxically, the absence of a truly metaphysical dimension in this poetry has not damned it in the eyes of modern "myth and ritual"

criticism. For all the more specific *desiderata* of such criticism are present in high concentration and perfection: wit, paradox, irony, ambiguity — consisting in Ransom of balanced possibilities — traditionalism in form and matter, refined or "aristocratic" taste, and rich sensibility. But none of these qualities, at least in the isolation in which some New Critics discuss them, accounts for Ransom's achievement. Ransom is a poet by virtue of his sensitive and sure control of his medium, and he is a distinguished poet by grace of a poetic personality that has infused a compelling charm through everything he has written.

MORTON SEIF:

Sherwood's Forest

In Ohio I thumbed a ride
with a silent man and his bride,
    This happened:
from some lake in the folds
of her wedding gown
this snow-woman
from who knows what town,
glancing at her new hubby,
drew a crisp hand and plunged it
through what must have been mountains
pressing down upon my thigh
five canticles of flesh.

I sat there with stories of Anderson on my mind,
not of the factory and whiskey kind,
but quests and hands he had followed
up elms and through the blackthorn bush.
I guessed then that was why
the shaggy soul stampedes at night
on the fenced-in white prairie;
or leafy mornings in his bed alone
he might have known
    perhaps this woman.

OLIVER SNYDER:

A Note on 'Billy Budd'

Although I believe that, finally, "the real theme of *Billy Budd* is castration and cannibalism, the ritual murder and the eating of the Host,"[1] there is I think another and prior level of meaning: the political. They are, of course, intricately related, and an extended analysis would show this important relation fully. But this brief note is merely an attempt to establish the groundwork, and to demonstrate the existence of the political level.

Billy Budd does not begin with Chapter I, but with a Preface. In two paragraphs, Melville not only introduces us to the Great Mutiny, an important factor in Billy's trial (which is, of course, further dealt with in the story), but also, significantly, relates the Mutiny to the French Revolution and its consequences — "it was something caught from the Revolutionary Spirit." Melville also intimates that, like the Great Mutiny which led to important reforms in the British Navy, the Revolution did result in "a political advance." Now all this is somehow related to the story of *Billy Budd* and if the word, "preface," is used in the way that Webster says it "commonly" is, (and in the way in which I like to believe that it is being used here) then it is "explanatory of the object and scope of the book."

Billy Budd is first described as the Handsome Sailor, "though with important variations." And Melville, far from ignoring these "variations," is quite explicit in bringing them to our attention. Although "in many respects . . . little more than a sort of upright barbarian, much such perhaps as Adam presumably might have been ere the urbane Serpent wriggled himself into his company," Billy Budd has one flaw — he stutters. Stuttering most frequently appears in childhood and adolescence. It is, therefore, not irrelevant that Melville calls him the "child man," "Baby," and "Budd." Billy is, indeed, but half a man, much as the innocent, pure Adam of the Garden of Eden is but half-man. Lacking the only kind of knowledge which we recognize, *i.e.,* knowledge acquired by knowing good *and* evil, Billy is pure good. (Milton's unsatisfactory and tortured analysis of the kind of knowledge that Adam had before the Fall is pertinent here; *"O felix*

[1] R. V. Chase, *Herman Melville:* A Critical Study.

culpa!" is also a cry of satisfaction at having cut more than one Gordian knot. In *Areopagitica,* however, he quite conclusively proves that knowledge can only be obtained by knowing good and evil.) As such, Billy is worshiped much as God is worshiped as pure good. He is a symbol not only for the reader but for his fellow sailors, who recognize the improbability of the existence of such a personification. Confronted with a word made flesh, what else can men do but pay homage to him? He, who is a part of them and who should be their "champion" and "spokesman," stutters and is inarticulate. Indeed, he is the best part of the working class, those "Representatives of the Human Race" who came "before the bar of the first French Assembly." (The precise historical fact that the first French Assembly mainly represented the middle class — even if he knew it — did not, I think, interest Melville.) Strong, handsome, courageous, simple, honest, and good-natured, Billy is the limited, adolescent, partial, Common Man who is a victim of Cain's City's (the Old World's) "hereditary wrongs."

Opposed to Billy's natural goodness is Claggart's natural depravity. Evil, intellect, urbanity, subtlety, glibness, darkness is the other half of man. But Claggart is also of the lower class: although first "assigned to the least honorable section of a man-of-war's crew, . . . he did not long remain there"; he became a *petty* officer. "A peculiar ferreting genius" brought him up in the ranks but could not make him a commissioned officer, who was usually drawn from the aristocracy. In other words, Claggart is the other part of the Common Man, which Billy cannot (and does not) recognize but which nevertheless is there in him: in Billy's stutter, Melville tells us, we can see the Devil's calling card.

"Though in the hour of elemental uproar or peril, he was everything that a sailor should be, yet under sudden provocation of strong heart-feeling," he stuttered. Like the maturing working class which they symbolize, both Claggart and Billy functioned efficiently in their jobs, but deep within Claggart was the ache for innocence, and within Billy, the stutter (castration, self-sacrifice, etc.). Man is more than a sailor (that is, man is more than an economic being), Melville seems to be saying, and must exist in this world which is Cain's City. Billy succeeds well in Eden and childhood, which is symbolized by the blissful period aboard the ship, *Rights of Man* (the *natural* rights are inherent in the state of nature). But the way of the world is Cain's law, force and law. And the working class and Billy must come of age and take their place in the world as mature men.

Billy has to stand face to face with his other, evil self, Claggart,

with his very life at stake (as is Claggart's), while the "indomitable" conservative aristocratic law (the Captain) judges. At the inevitable confrontation, Billy is rendered completely mindless and voiceless by the horror of evil: his intellect is bound by his very innocence and his resulting lack of knowledge is the necessary evil concomitant. In so desperate a situation Billy can only revolt, and with a tremendous blow he strikes Claggart on the forehead. By thus trying to crush his apparent enemy, the mind (knowledge), Billy both reveals, and gives way to, his own limitations and ignorance: the Captain was more than ready to believe Billy and he had merely to state his case in order to win it. But blindly and passionately, like the blood fury of the proletariat in the French Revolution, he broke the only laws — "forms, measured forms are everything" — that can hold evil, the unconscious, the dark side of man — in a word, Claggart — in bounds. To allow Billy to go free would be equivalent to the freeing of "the wild denizens of the woods" from the "spell-binding" of forms: the crew would revolt. Too good, too innocent, and too dangerous to live in this world the *"child* man" must be sacrificed to the new *man* who will be resurrected from him. Out of the agony of the French Revolution, there indeed came the greatest political advance of all time. Relating it to basic and timeless myths, Melville wrote a great political Mystery drama, and gave us a brilliant insight into historical processes.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST, 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946

Of ACCENT, published quarterly at Urbana, Illinois, for October 1, 1950.
State of Illinois
County of Champaign

Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Kerker Quinn, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the editor and publisher of ACCENT and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership and management of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (section 437, P L & R), to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are Kerker Quinn, Charles Shattuck, John Schacht, and George Scouffas — all of Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Illinois.

2. That the owners are: Kerker Quinn, Charles Shattuck, John Schacht, and George Scouffas — all of Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Illinois.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

Kerker Quinn

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of September, 1949.

Katherine H. Peer, Notary Public
(My commission expires November, 1953)

JOSEPH WARREN BEACH:

The Definition of Donne

LEONARD UNGER: *Donne's Poetry and Modern Criticism.* Henry Regnery Co.

The operation performed by Leonard Unger in this brief study is remarkable for surgical neatness and despatch. His instruments are instruments of precision, ground to a keen edge, and thoroughly boiled to prevent septic contamination. The only anesthetic used is a perfect objectivity of attitude and tone in regard to the patients under the knife. It is impossible to take personally the exposure of error where it is done with such entire freedom from rhetorical heat.

The operation in question was for the removal of certain morbid growths — errors of statement in regard to the nature of "metaphysical" poetry and especially that of John Donne. Perhaps it would be better to characterize this undertaking not as a surgical operation but as an assignment in laboratory research. Mr. Unger does not start with an assumption of error on the part of the "modern" critics; his task is to make a close examination of Donne's poetry with a view to determining how far the standard descriptions of it are in conformity with the material facts. His first step must be to delimit the subject of his investigation. He does not take the whole body of Donne's poetry but merely his "Songs and Sonets" — which, however, do include the best-known of his poems and those on which current statements about Donne are largely based. If the current definitions of metaphysical poetry do not apply to the "Songs and Sonets," they certainly will not hold as comprehensively true for the "metaphysical" as ordinarily understood. He is not undertaking to make an original interpretation of Donne's poetry or determine the order of its greatness. His aim is to find out whether it is strictly definable in terms of "conceit" and "complexity of attitudes."

His second step is to define his terms; and this Mr. Unger does with a precision most rare in literary discussions, and with an acuteness of discrimination more common among professional philosophers than among scientists, though highly important in all the more abstruse ranges of scientific investigation. The next step must be the detailed analysis of individual poems, and especially those most often cited — taking them item by item, thought by thought, and figure by figure, so as to see whether or not the current definitions do literally apply.

This undertaking calls for a style as free as possible from the devices of imaginative or "creative" writing, from figure and imagery as a support to rational abstraction. There is nothing here of Swinburne or Pater, or of the pregnant "suggestiveness" of Coleridge. In this respect, indeed, Unger shows his affiliation with the "modern" school of critics with whom he is often obliged to take issue — with Grierson, Eliot, Williamson; above all, with Ransom, Tate and Brooks — men whom he admires and follows so closely in general critical method and tone. One quality that he shares with Eliot and Ransom, but carries even further, is extreme economy of words — never developing his idea beyond the minimum requirement of clear statement. His great point of difference from the "Southern" school, to which he essentially belongs, is the way he adds to

"scientific objectivity" the even more scientific habit of constantly checking his statements by the available data — and I mean by that, in this case, not the supposed spirit, or intentions, or personal quality of Donne, but the actual poems as they are found upon the page — the words, the thoughts (as they may be "paraphrased" by the critic), the metaphors as they follow one another in successive stanzas, as they appear and disappear and serve either to adorn or embody the thought.

What Unger set out to determine was whether the metaphysical conceit is in point of fact the structural basis for Donne's poems and the sufficient cause of their poetic appeal — whether, as the case is stated in its most extreme form by Cleanth Brooks, "the comparison [which constitutes the conceit] *is* the poem in a structural sense." To begin with, Unger quotes the most pertinent passages from the six critics concerned and carefully indicates the points of agreement and disagreement in their account of Donne's poetical procedure. He then sums up the four main, and slightly differing, positions, with progressive emphasis on the primacy of the conceit; as follows:

(1) The conceit is simply a frequent, a habitual device in the poetry.
(2) The conceit, as it is distinctive of an exemplary metaphysical poem, is a single extended metaphor comprising the whole poem.
(3) The metaphysical poem, not necessarily based on a single metaphor, at no point departs from the manner of the conceit, the poem showing a development of imagery by logical extension.
(4) Whatever thought may be extracted or restated from a typical passage of metaphysical poetry is, in the passage, expressed by a trope.

He then examines a large number of poems in detail and refers to many more that are similar to those so examined, and reaches the following conclusions. Point (1) is correct. The conceit is a very frequent device in Donne's poetry, though not perhaps as "habitual" as commonly thought. Doubt begins to attach itself to the second formulation. Unger finds very few poems of Donne in which an entire poem is comprised of a single extended metaphor. (3) Many other things appear in Donne's poems besides "development of imagery by logical extension." Often the metaphoric imagery is not extensively or consistently developed through the whole poem, or even through passages comprising several stanzas. Sometimes several conceits are found in the same poem, not related to one another logically or even by direct process of association of ideas. And finally, (4), in many of the poems, parts of the thought are developed "dramatically," through situation and action, rather than, or as well as, by metaphorical imagery; and other parts are sometimes developed by what you might call abstract statement of thought.

And so he comes to the general conclusion that one can not say of Donne's work that the structure of the poem is necessarily constituted by the consistent development of a conceited comparison. Many other things must be taken into account if we are to appreciate the sources of his appeal.

Another of the features of Donne's poetry which has been noted by modern critics is the "ambiguity" of attitude shown by the poet. This is what Unger calls "complexity of attitudes"; and he examines the poems with a view to determining whether there is any one "pattern" of complex, or opposed, attitudes that is "exemplary" for Donne's poems as a whole. His findings are negative. There

are many different types of opposition according to the varied interests of the poet. And while it is true that "complexity of attitudes 'informs' metaphysical poetry," still, "unless one puts a special value on complexity of attitudes — or some comparable feature — there is no conceivable structure that is superior to any other." Moreover, as he shows by analysis, complexity of attitudes is often developed in the poem by "dramatic" rather than by figurative means, and *"no causal relationship between this complexity and extended metaphor is discernible."* (my italics).

This leads him to some brief discussion of what it is that gives interest or "value" to Donne's poetry. And he finds that there are such sources of interest, including the specific subjects in connection with which the conceits and the complexity of attitudes operate — such, for example, as love and death and religious faith. And there are other matters that add to the appeal of the poems, such as the *realism* inherent in the display of complexity, the *psychology* of the poet or his representative in the poem, the elements of *surprise* and *wit* in the development of the thought, as well, of course, as matters of rhythm, tone, vocabulary, etc. And all these matters vary in degree of appeal to the reader according to his individual temperament and line of interest.

Mr. Unger takes for granted the high quality of Donne's poetry, without saying much about it. He seems to admire Donne for his individual force and spirit, and to find him very interesting as an example of metaphysical method. Unger should have the effect of making future critics much more careful in their statements as to the defining characteristics of metaphysical poetry.

What is most wholesome about his critical approach is his disposition to ask again what are the sources of interest in poetry. He finds that these are much broader than can be comprehended under the current notions of the metaphysical. He does not set up Donne as a model who must be followed by all poets who wish to receive the episcopal imprimatur. If Unger finds a hearing among writers of poetry, he may have the effect of freeing some of them from the shackles of a somewhat crippling dogmatism. If he can find a hearing among critics, he might even produce a minor revolution in poetic theory. If he is ignored, it will be either because his quiet and reasonable voice cannot make itself heard in the noisy clash of schools, or else it will be that his independent appeal to facts encounters too much resistance from those who have a vested interest in maintaining positions which he has shown to be untenable.

STEPHEN STEPANCHEV:

The World as a Vaudeville

DELMORE SCHWARTZ: *Vaudeville for a Princess and Other Poems.* New Directions.

In his new collection of poems, his first since 1943, Delmore Schwartz offers spectacle, songs, comic skits, and verbal acrobatics to his princess and his readers, for the world, which was a wedding to him not so long ago, has now become a vaudeville. There is a music-hall gayety in the rhythms, the images, and the antic incongruities of ideal and fact in many of the verses, for the poet is saying yes to the universe, to its harmonies and disharmonies alike, a little in the fashion of Margaret Fuller! Unfortunately the joyousness is self-conscious — Schwartz is clearly amused as he amuses — and the best poems, as a matter of fact, are not gay at all. The poet appears most appealing in his stormiest moods, when confronting public crises and personal sorrow and guilt. So basic, seemingly, is Schwartz's sense of loss that his evocations of noon often imply midnight.

The first section of the book, "Vaudeville for a Princess" — suggested, as the author reveals, by Princess Elizabeth's amiable interest in Danny Kaye — consists of verse and prose pieces intermingled. Several of the poems are parodies of light Elizabethan lyrics like Sir Edward Dyer's "My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is" and Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love"; the prose pieces are comic essays on such diverse subjects as Existentialism, *Othello, Hamlet,* the promiscuity of Don Giovanni, the character of famous men whom Schwartz has known, and the difficulties of divorce in New York. Unhappily, the essays are not very funny, and, in fact, seem curiously vulgar to be coming from a writer of such known taste, but the verse is witty, lively, and pleasant in its smooth regularity. The best poem of the group, however, is "True Recognition Often Is Refused," in which there is neither lightness nor humor but a sad awareness of the "dull dim suffering" of the poet earning his due.

The rest of the book consists of a long poem, "The True, the Good, and the Beautiful," and a sequence of lyrics, mostly sonnets, for which Schwartz has chosen as epigraph F. Scott Fitzgerald's famous remark, "In the real dark night of the soul, it is always three o'clock in the morning." In many of these lyrics one finds a poignant revelation of dismay and awe before the mysteries of joy and love, skillfully managed in careful language, but the range of feeling and subject matter in the sequence as a whole is considerable and the technical proficiency is by no means uniform. The best writing of the volume appears in Schwartz's notable war poem, "The True, the Good, and the Beautiful," in which the Platonic ideal is projected ironically against a background of public disorder and moral ambiguity.

Readers of Delmore Schwartz will not find his affirmations very persuasive; they will ask whether he himself has been convinced; but they will undoubtedly be challenged into feeling by the spectacle of his vaudeville and be beguiled by his song.